VOL 3

SPIDER-MAN®

TERRY DODSON RACHEL

MILLAR • DODSON

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THE IDENTITY OF AUNT MAY'S ABDUCTOR IS FINALLY REVEALED!

But is that the villain who really pulls the strings? Things heat up as Spidey and the Black Cat face off against the might of the Sinister Twelve. HOLY COW, TRUE BELIEVERS! DID WE SAY TWELVE? Even with the tough-as-nails Black Cat by his side, how can the web-slinger possibly defeat twelve of the most powerful super-villains on the planet? The roller-coaster ride that is MARVEL KNIGHTS SPIDER-MAN picks up speed, riding a corkscrew to its conclusion!

Collecting *Marvel Knights Spider-Man #9-12*, written by Mark Millar *(The Ultimates)* and illustrated by Terry Dodson *(Spider-Man/Black Cat: The Evil That Men Do)*.

VOL 3

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MARVEL PSR 9
MARK MILLAR • TERRY DODSON • RACHEL DODSON
SPIDER-MAN
THE LAST STAND
1 of 4
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PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"LAST STAND"

PART I OF IV

Peter Parker is losing his mind. His identity has been compromised, his Aunt May has been kidnapped, and almost every villain he has ever faced has been thrown at him recently. But for what purpose? Who is behind this kidnapping and these plots against him by all his old foes? The answer has been promised by a mysterious caller who wants to meet Spider-Man for lunch where he tells him everything will be divulged…

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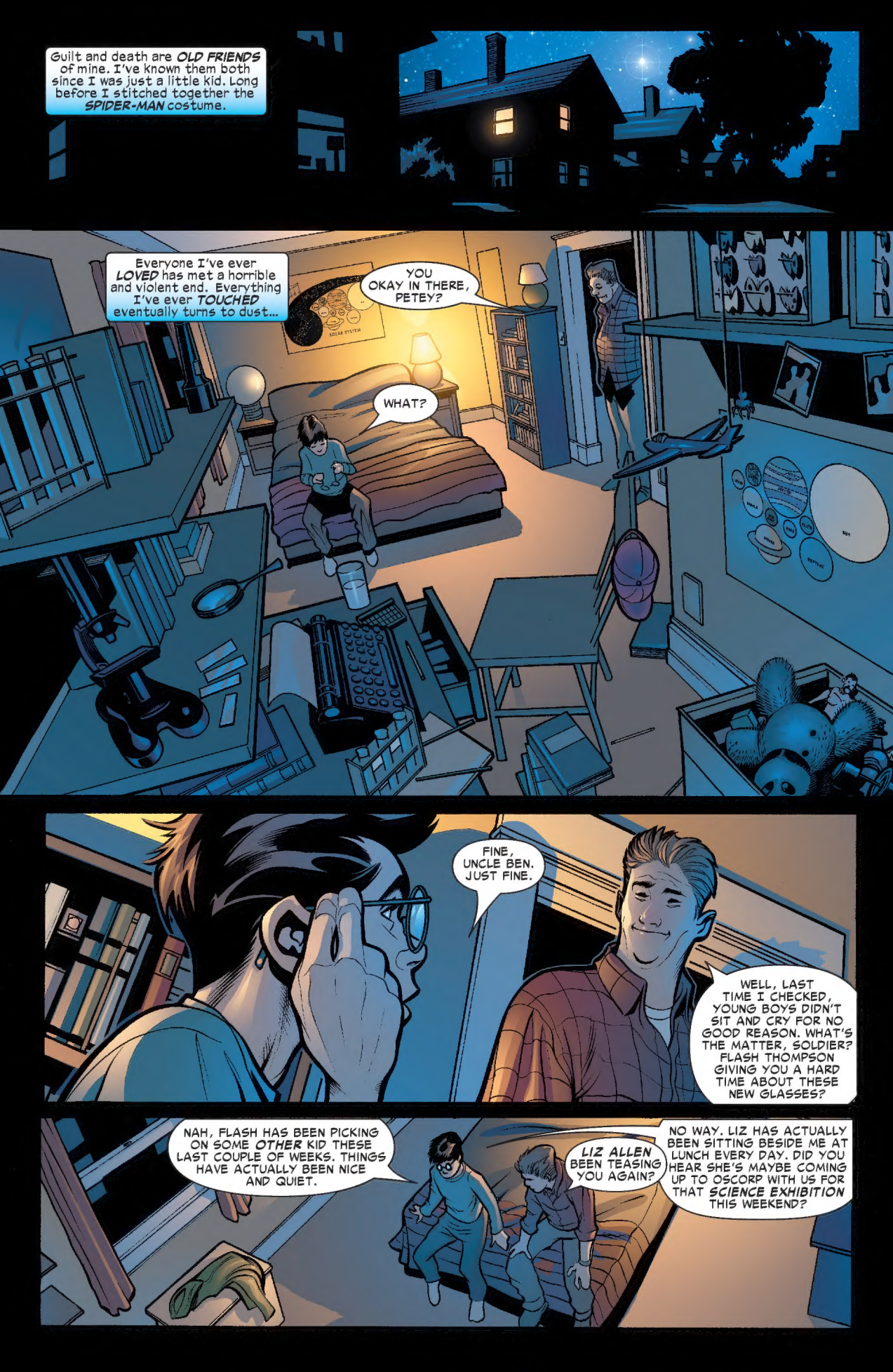

Guilt and death are OLD FRIENDS of mine. I've known them both since I was just a little kid. Long before I stitched together the SPIDER-MAN costume.
Everyone I've ever LOVED has met a horrible and violent end. Everything I've ever TOUCHED eventually turns to dust...
YOU OKAY IN THERE, PETEY?
WHAT?
FINE, UNCLE BEN. JUST FINE.
WELL, LAST TIME I CHECKED, YOUNG BOYS DIDN'T SIT AND CRY FOR NO GOOD REASON. WHAT'S THE MATTER, SOLDIER? FLASH THOMPSON GIVING YOU A HARD TIME ABOUT THESE NEW GLASSES?
NAH, FLASH HAS BEEN PICKING ON SOME OTHER KID THESE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS. THINGS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN NICE AND QUIET.
LIZ ALLEN BEEN TEASING YOU AGAIN?
NO WAY. LIZ HAS ACTUALLY BEEN SITTING BESIDE ME AT LUNCH EVERY DAY. DID YOU HEAR SHE'S MAYBE COMING UP TO OSCORP WITH US FOR THAT SCIENCE EXHIBITION THIS WEEKEND?

SOUNDS TO ME LIKE SHE'S GOT A LITTLE CRUSH ON SOMEBODY, MISTER PARKER. THIS TIME NEXT YEAR, YOU WON'T EVEN WANNA KNOW A DUMB, OLD GUY LIKE ME.
DON'T SAY THAT.
C'MON, PAL. JUST TELL ME WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU, HUH?
I CAN'T. IT'S TOO STUPID.
CAN'T BE THAT STUPID IF IT'S MAKING YOU CRY. C'MON, BUDDIES AREN'T SUPPOSED TO HAVE SECRETS.
OKAY. IT'S JUST...
WELL, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU AND AUNT MAY ARE MUCH OLDER, I MEAN YEARS AND YEARS OLDER THAN EVERYBODY ELSE'S FOLKS, RIGHT?
NO DENYING THAT.
AND IT JUST KINDA HIT ME THAT IF YOU'RE TWENTY OR THIRTY YEARS OLDER THAN ALL THE MOMS AND DADS, THAT MEANS WHEN EVERYONE ELSE'S PARENTS HIT FORTY AND FIFTY, YOU...YOU AND AUNT MAY...
WHAT?
WELL, YOU AND AUNT MAY MIGHT NOT BE HERE ANYMORE...AND I'LL BE LEFT ON MY OWN AGAIN...
AW, PETER.

IS THAT WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT? C'MERE AND GIVE ME A HUG, HUH? C'MERE AND GIVE ME A BIG HUG, LITTLE MONKEY-BOY.
I'M SORRY. DON'T TELL AUNT MAY I'VE BEEN CRYING.
HEY, DON'T BE CRAZY. OF COURSE I WON'T. GOD, AND I THOUGHT I WAS SENSITIVE WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN...
SOLAR SYSTEM
WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, SON. YOU SEE YOUR AUNT MAY DOWN THERE? HER MOM LIVED 'TIL SHE WAS NINETY-EIGHT AND HER GRANDMOTHER LIVED 'TIL SHE WAS A HUNDRED AND TWO.
LIKEWISE, MY OLD MAN SMOKED LIKE A CHIMNEY AND DOWNED A BOTTLE OF SCOTCH EVERY NIGHT AND STILL LIVED 'TIL HE WAS A MONTH OFF EIGHTY-NINE.
REALLY?
WE'RE FROM GOOD STOCK, KIDDO. AND BESIDES, WE PROMISED YOUR MOM AND DAD THAT IF ANYTHING EVER HAPPENED TO THEM, WE'D BE HERE TO LOOK AFTER YOU, RIGHT?
DO I LOOK LIKE THE KIND OF GUY WHO'S GONNA LET DOWN HIS LITTLE BROTHER?
ONLY THE GOOD DIE YOUNG, PETER PARKER. THAT MEANS YOUR OLD UNCLE BEN HERE'S GONNA LIVE FOREVER.
SOLAR SYSTE
But he died, of course. Just a few years later. He liked his eggs and bacon too much to live forever, but it wasn't his heart or his lungs or his cholesterol that finished off poor Uncle Ben.
It was a burglar with a gun and it was all my fault.
BELOVED HUSBAND AND
I'd never seen as many lilies as I saw at that funeral.

GWEN was next. Gwen STACY. That girl had a smile that could halt traffic and yet she lived in that pink apartment filled with dolls and teddy bears.
Poor, little Gwen. I'll never forget how HELPLESS she looked lying there. The smell of cordite from Osborn's PUMPKIN-BOMBS...
The sound of the cars, the honking of horns, Osborn's Goblin-Glider reflecting that beautiful, perfect sunlight...
The sound of her NECK snapping...
KRAK!
MORE lilies.

Uncle Ben and Gwen. Mom, Dad and Harry Osborn.
Captain Stacy, Jean DeWolffe, Bennett Brant and Freddie Foswell. Even poor old BEN REILLY, God rest his soul.
I've been to more funerals than anyone I've ever known and I'm starting to wonder if it all comes down to PROBABILITY.
Did my becoming Spider-Man send that ripple through their lives? Is this madness on some exponential curve that just gets steeper with every passing year?
I've buried too many people since I put on this mask, but I won't let Aunt May be the next to go down.
Not while this animal who snatched her SWEARS she's still alive.
Not while there's still a chance.

LAST STAND
PART ONE OF FOUR
STAR
Nana's
TiTO's
UNIT
SIMO
SEZ
THE POLA EXPRES
THE INVINCIB
FEGRED FANS
Sparky's
RCO'S

GOOD MORNING, SPIDER-MAN.
ARE YOU SURPRISED?
WHAT?
SURPRISED IT WAS ME WHO KIDNAPPED OLD MAY. I WAS SCARED TO CALL AT FIRST BECAUSE I THOUGHT MY VOICE WOULD GIVE THE WHOLE THING AWAY, BUT YOU REALLY DIDN'T FIGURE IT OUT, DID YOU?
YOU REALLY DIDN'T GUESS IT WAS ME ALL ALONG.
DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER?
IS THIS A JOKE?
AM I SUCH A SECOND-STRINGER NOW, I HAVE TO FREAKIN' TELL YOU?
MAC GARGAN.
THE SCORPION.

TELL ME WHERE SHE IS, OR I'LL BREAK YOUR NECK!
NICE MOVES, SPIDER-MAN. NOW WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO ON NATIONAL TV AND TELL EVERYONE WHO YOU ARE.
DON'T SECRET IDENTITIES MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU PEOPLE ANYMORE?
RIGHT NOW ALL I CARE ABOUT IS ONE THING, YOU PIECE OF TRASH. WHERE IS SHE?
ALIVE.
AS LONG AS YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH TO DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.

NOW THREATEN ME AGAIN AND SHE'S DEAD. EVEN LOOK AT ME THE WRONG WAY AND SHE'S DEAD.
I'M NOT KIDDING AROUND HERE, SPIDER-MAN. THIS LITTLE TALK STAYS NICE AND CIVILIZED OR YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO SEE THAT SWEET, GRAY-HAIRED, OLD TRAMP AGAIN. UNDERSTAND?
PROVE IT!
PROVE SHE'S STILL ALIVE!
YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE IN ANY POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS HERE, BUDDY? NOW PUT ME DOWN BEFORE I GET TICKED OFF AND WALK AWAY FROM THIS ENTIRE SITUATION.
GOOD BOY.
NOW LET'S GO GET SOME LUNCH AND TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE DOING FOR US, HUH?

WHY DID MARVEL GIRL THINK SHE WAS ALREADY DEAD?
WHAT?
MARVEL GIRL. THE PSYCHIC FROM THE X-MEN. WHY DID SHE TELL ME AUNT MAY WAS ALREADY DEAD?
BEATS ME.
I'VE NEVER KILLED ANYONE BEFORE, GARGAN. KILLING SOMEBODY IS JUST ABOUT THE WORST THING I CAN IMAGINE ANYONE EVER DOING. BUT, GOD HELP US, IF YOU'RE *LYING* TO ME HERE--
REMEMBER WHAT I SAID WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU *THREATENED* ME AGAIN, SPIDER-MAN?

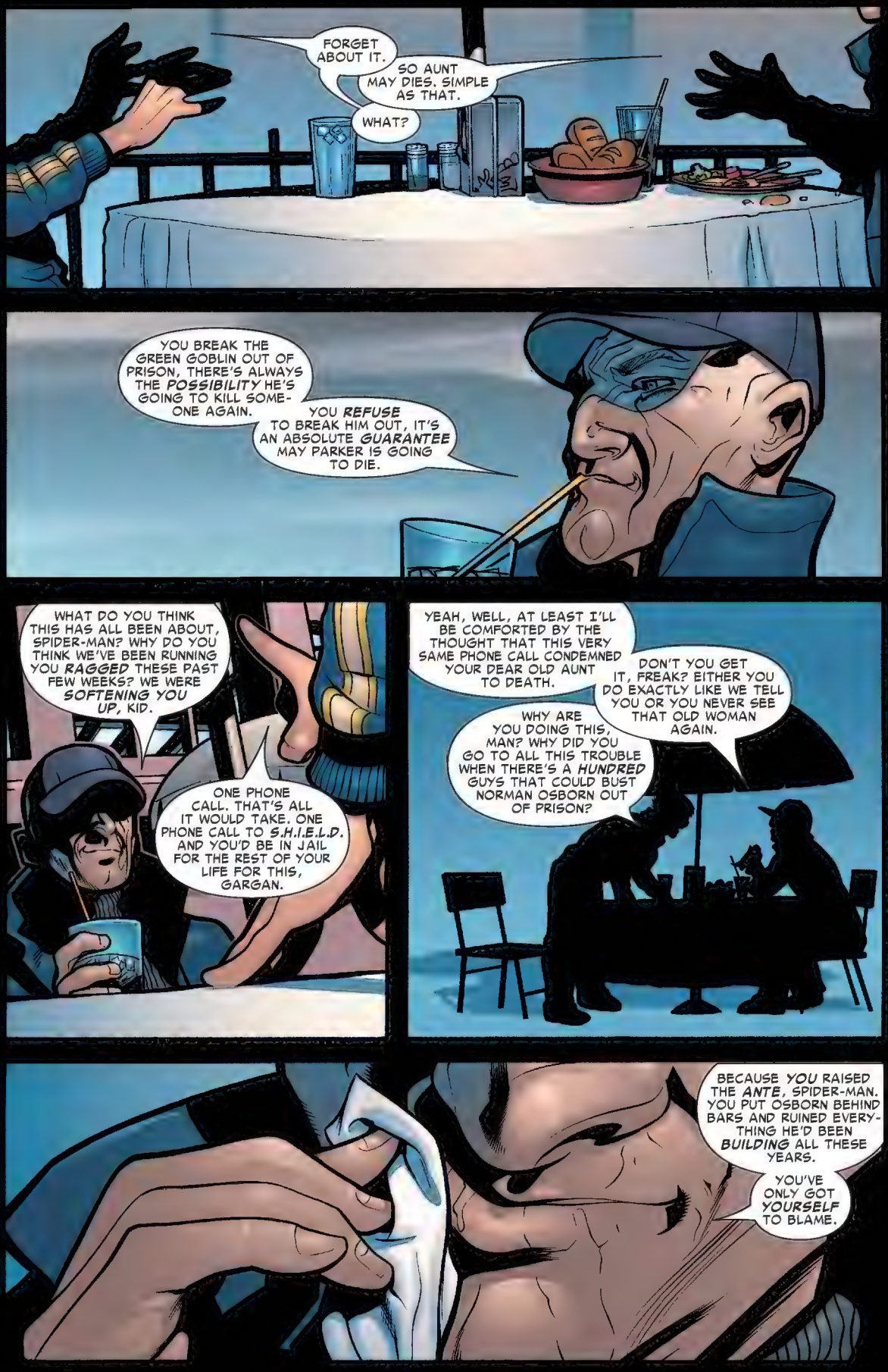
HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN?
A YEAR?
OH, YEAH.
YOUR SECRET IDENTITY? COMING UP ON A YEAR THIS CHRISTMAS, I THINK.
BUT WHY WOULD YOU KEEP IT A SECRET ALL THAT TIME? AND WHERE DID YOU FIND THAT FIVE MILLION BUCKS YOU GAVE THE DAILY BUGLE?
YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY VENOM, GARGAN. YOU'RE B-LIST AT BEST.
OH, SPIDER-MAN. YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE A CLUE, DO YOU? HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED ALL THIS OUT YET? HAVEN'T YOU GUESSED WHO HIRED ME HERE?
THIS IS NORMAN OSBORN'S MASTERPIECE, KID.
THE GREEN GOBLIN'S REVENGE.
WHAT?
OSBORN TOLD YOU WHO I WAS?
OH, HE DID A LOT MORE THAN THAT, BABY.
NORMAN TOLD ME THAT IF YOU EVER TOOK HIM DOWN, IF YOU EVER HAD HIM ARRESTED OR PUBLICLY EXPOSED, THAT THIS LITTLE GAME YOU'VE BOTH BEEN PLAYING GOES UP A NOTCH OR TWO.
THIS ISN'T A GAME, GARGAN.

AH, C'MON. YOU GET A COSTUME, HE GETS A COSTUME. HE KILLS YOUR UNBORN CHILD, YOU KILL HIS SON.
I *DIDN'T* KILL HARRY.
WHATEVER,
THIS WAS JUST ONE OF OSBORN'S HUNDREDS OF PLANS AND COUNTERPLANS. YOU EVER BEEN IN HIS HIDEOUT? YOU EVER SEE THOSE SCHEMES AND ARROWS AND BOXES HE HAS ALL OVER HIS WALLS?
HE'S HAD THIS ONE PLANNED SINCE THE MINUTE HE FOUND OUT WHO YOU WERE, KID. WHY DO YOU THINK HE TARGETED THE *OLD* BROAD INSTEAD OF THAT *HOTTIE* YOU EVENTUALLY BAGGED?
THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. IF OSBORN HAS REALLY BEEN BEHIND THIS WHOLE THING, WHY DID HE LOOK SO *SCARED* WHEN I SPOKE TO HIM BACK AT RYKER'S?
BECAUSE KIDNAPPING MAY PARKER WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, SPIDER-MAN. YOU NEVER WONDER WHY YOU ALWAYS FIGHT THE *SAME GUYS* OVER AND OVER AGAIN?
WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN YOU AND MAY PARKER, YOU KNOW. MAY WAS JUST THE *INSURANCE POLICY*. THE REAL MEAT AND POTATOES IS WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN THE BACKGROUND ALL THESE YEARS.

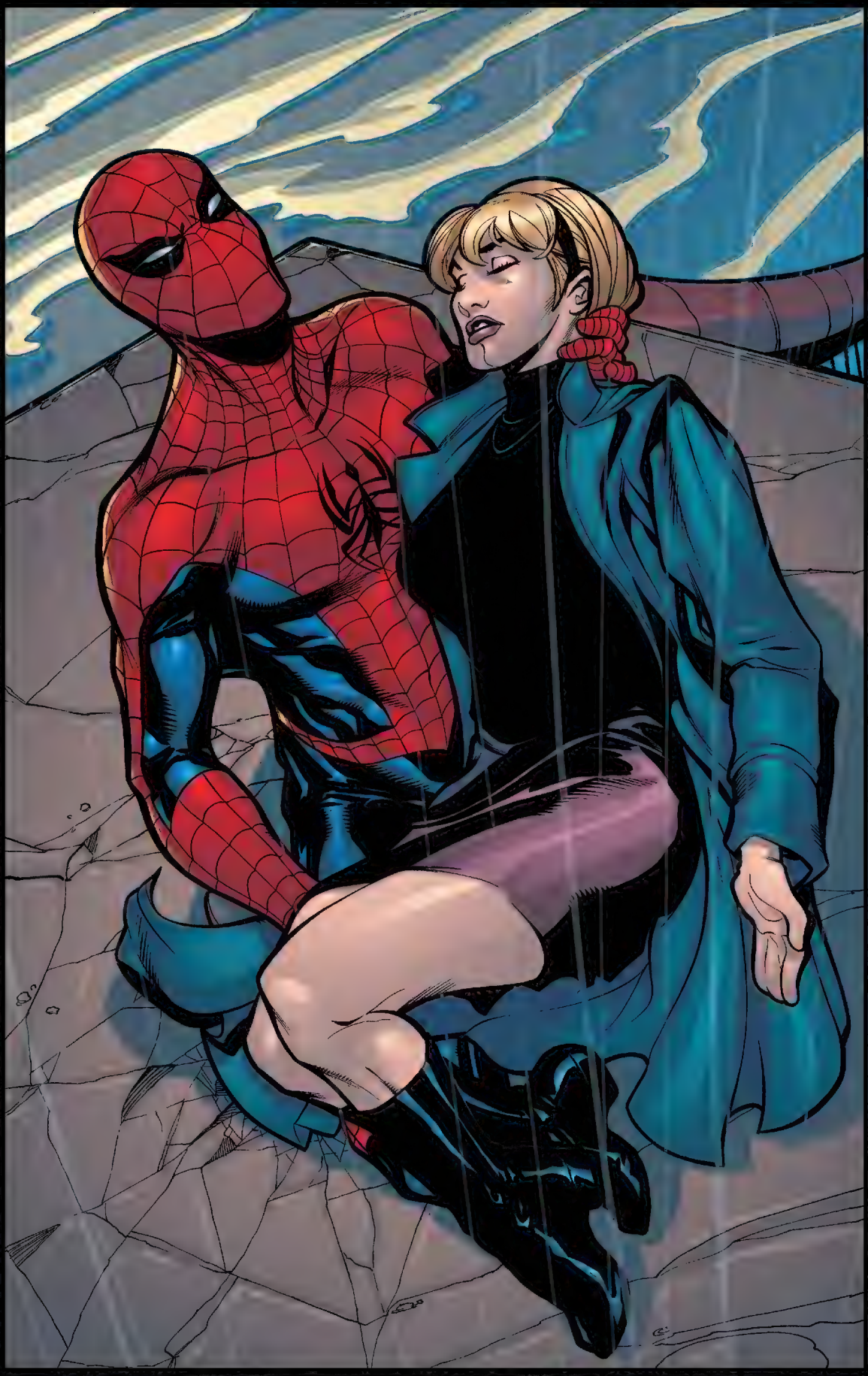
"IMAGINE IT'S NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE AND YOU'RE ONE OF THE RICHEST MEN ON THE PLANET. YOU GOT EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED.
"GIRLS, MONEY, POWER. YOU'RE LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM AND ALL THE LITTLE WORKER-BEES ARE WORKING ROUND THE CLOCK TO KEEP YOU THERE.
"THEN THESE GUYS IN MASKS START SHOWING UP, RIGHTING WRONGS AND THROWING THEIR SUPER-POWERS AROUND.
"THEY SAY THEY'RE HERE TO FIGHT INJUSTICE AND YOU KNOW IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY START LOOKING AT THE BOOKS AND SEEING THE WAY THIS WORLD OF YOURS *REALLY* OPERATES.
"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A THOUSAND YEARS, THE RULING CLASS IS UNDER THREAT, AND BULLETS WEREN'T GONNA KEEP *THIS* REVOLUTION DOWN. BULLETS JUST BOUNCE OFF THESE GUYS' *CHESTS*.
"SO WHAT DO THEY DO? WHAT'S THE GENIUS PLAN THAT MAN CREATES TO KEEP THE SUPERMAN IN CHECK? ANY IDEAS?"
EASY.
THEY CREATE THE SUPER BAD-GUY.
"YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT IN THOSE DAYS THE WORLD WASN'T REALLY BROKEN DOWN INTO HEROES AND VILLAINS AS CLEARLY AS IT IS NOW.
"HEROES LIVED OUTSIDE THE LAW. THAT'S WHY MOST OF THEM HAD MASKS. THESE RICH GUYS JUST SAW THEM ALL AS ONE BIG, COLLECTIVE THREAT AND DECIDED TO SET THEM *AGAINST* EACH OTHER.
"DIVIDE AND CONQUER, AS THEY SAY.

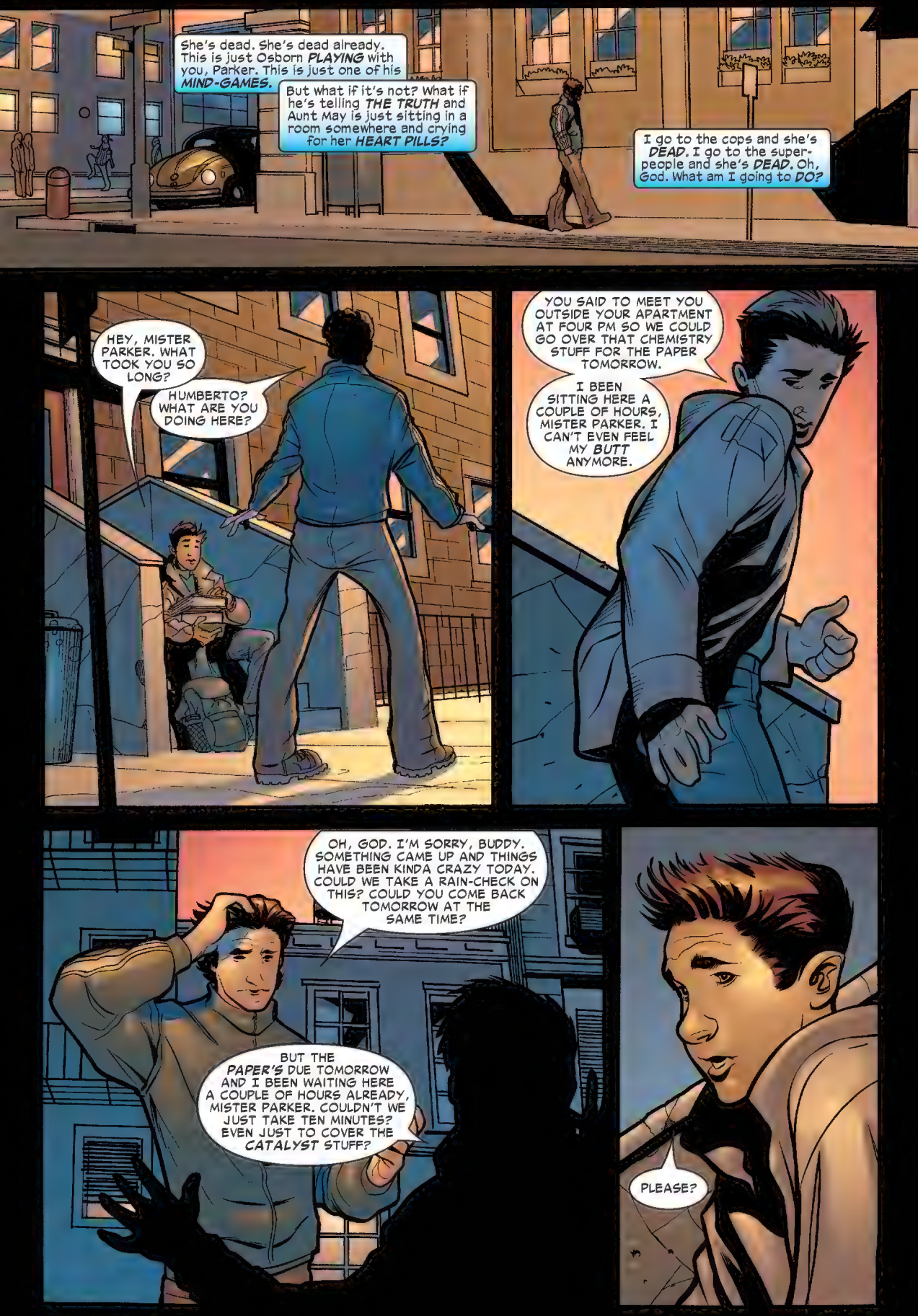
"HALF THE VILLAINS IN THE OLD DAYS WERE JUST EX-GIs ON A SALARY. WHY DO YOU THINK NOBODY *IMPORTANT* EVER GOT OFFED? WHY DID THEY ALWAYS GO AFTER THE SAME SUPER HEROES?
"THEY WERE *ASSIGNED* TO THESE GUYS, SPIDER-MAN. YOU GUYS WERE WRITTEN INTO THEIR *CONTRACTS*."
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY TRYING TO TELL ME ALL THE IDIOTS WE'VE FOUGHT OVER THE YEARS HAVE BEEN *STOOGES?*
DON'T BE CRAZY. WE'RE TALKING MAYBE ONE OR TWO ORGANIZERS FOR EACH SUPER HERO, BUT THAT'S ALL YOU REALLY NEED. ONCE YOU START THE BALL ROLLING, YOU JUST SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE FUN.
LOOK AT THAT AUCTION LAST MONTH: PEOPLE WERE BLEEDING THEMSELVES DRY TO BECOME AN A-LIST VILLAIN. THE WHOLE THING BECOMES *SELF-PERPETUATING* IF YOU'RE SMART ABOUT IT.
THIS IS *GARBAGE*. YOU'RE JUST MESSING WITH MY HEAD. THERE'S NO WAY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CREATE THEIR OWN SUPER-VILLAINS.
BUT THIS ISN'T THE GOVERNMENT. THESE ARE THE COMPANIES THAT PUT GOVERNMENTS IN OFFICE, AND NEUTRALIZING CAPES WAS A GENUINE *BUSINESS CONCERN* WHEN THEY FIRST APPEARED.
WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH NORMAN OSBORN?
"BILLIONAIRE? BIO-CHEMIST? ALL THOSE BIG MILITARY CONTRACTS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE SMART, SPIDER-MAN.
"OSBORN WAS THEIR FAVORITE SUPER-VILLAIN CONTRACTOR UNTIL HE WENT A LITTLE NUTS AND STARTED FLYING AROUND ON THAT *GOBLIN GLIDER* HE BUILT FOR HIMSELF."

OH MY GOD.
BUSH AND CLINTON FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS AND CLOSED DOWN ANY SUPER-VILLAIN PROGRAMS THEY HEARD ABOUT, BUT THERE WAS SOME VERY FAMOUS NAMES IN THAT ORIGINAL CABAL.
THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE TO KILL HIM, MAN. HE KNOWS WHERE ALL THE BODIES ARE BURIED AND NORMAN OSBORN LOCKED UP IN JAIL IS THE VERY DEFINITION OF A LOOSE CANNON.
AS LONG AS OSBORN'S LOCKED UP IN THAT CELL, HE'S A SITTING DUCK FOR THEM AND ANY WOULD-BE ASSASSINS THEY WANT TO SEND ALONG TO ICE THE POOR GUY.
IF THIS IS TRUE, IF THIS REALLY IS TRUE, WHY HAVEN'T THEY KILLED HIM BEFORE NOW? HE'S BEEN LOCKED UP FOR TWO OR THREE MONTHS, RIGHT?
LIKE I SAID, HE KNOWS WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED, SPIDER-MAN. ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM AND E-MAILS AND PARCELS START REACHING ALL THE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT THIS STUFF.
WHY DO YOU THINK THESE BREAK-INS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING AT OSCORP? THESE GUYS CAN'T PULL THE TRIGGER 'TIL THEY'RE SURE EVERY BASE HAS BEEN COVERED.
AND NOW THEY'RE ALMOST DONE, HUH?
EXACTLY. ALL THE LOOSE ENDS HAVE BEEN TIED UP AND WORD IS THEY'VE BRAINWASHED DOCTOR OCTOPUS TO KILL HIM THIS WEEKEND. DIDN'T YOU SEE THE MESS HE WAS IN A FEW WEEKS BACK?
THAT'S WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP, SUPER HERO.
NORMAN WANTS YOU TO BREAK HIM OUT OF PRISON TOMORROW NIGHT AT MIDNIGHT.

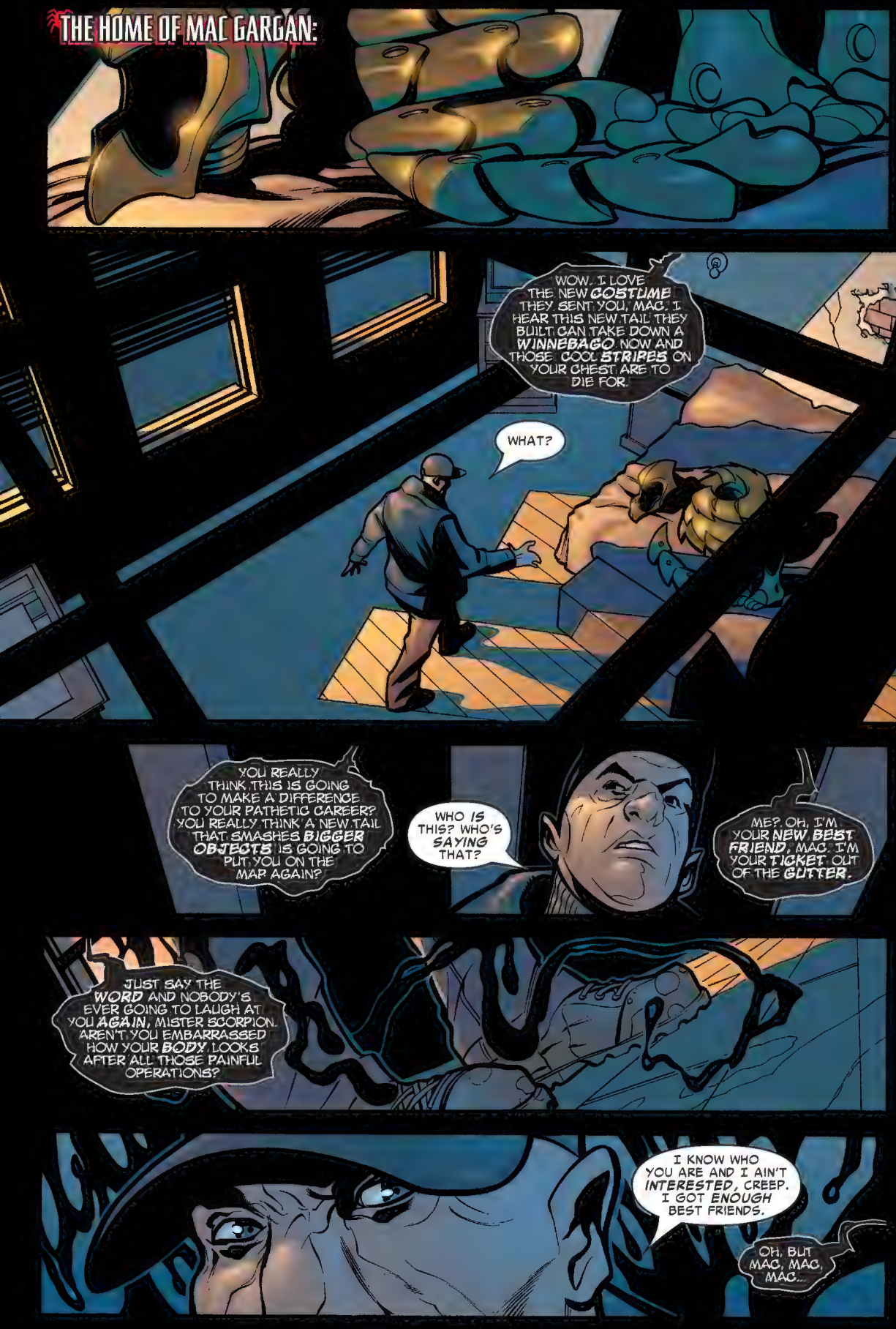

FORGET ABOUT IT.
SO AUNT MAY DIES. SIMPLE AS THAT.
WHAT?
YOU BREAK THE GREEN GOBLIN OUT OF PRISON, THERE'S ALWAYS THE *POSSIBILITY* HE'S GOING TO KILL SOMEONE AGAIN.
YOU *REFUSE* TO BREAK HIM OUT, IT'S AN ABSOLUTE *GUARANTEE* MAY PARKER IS GOING TO DIE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS HAS ALL BEEN ABOUT, SPIDER-MAN? WHY DO YOU THINK WE'VE BEEN RUNNING YOU *RAGGED* THESE PAST FEW WEEKS? WE WERE *SOFTENING YOU UP*, KID.
ONE PHONE CALL. THAT'S ALL IT WOULD TAKE. ONE PHONE CALL TO *S.H.I.E.L.D.* AND YOU'D BE IN JAIL FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE FOR THIS, GARGAN.
YEAH, WELL, AT LEAST I'LL BE COMFORTED BY THE THOUGHT THAT THIS VERY SAME PHONE CALL CONDEMNED YOUR DEAR OLD AUNT TO DEATH.
DON'T YOU GET IT, FREAK? EITHER YOU DO EXACTLY LIKE WE TELL YOU OR YOU NEVER SEE THAT OLD WOMAN AGAIN.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS, MAN? WHY DID YOU GO TO ALL THIS TROUBLE WHEN THERE'S A *HUNDRED* GUYS THAT COULD BUST NORMAN OSBORN OUT OF PRISON?
BECAUSE *YOU* RAISED THE *ANTE*, SPIDER-MAN. YOU PUT OSBORN BEHIND BARS AND RUINED EVERYTHING HE'D BEEN *BUILDING* ALL THESE YEARS.
YOU'VE ONLY GOT *YOURSELF* TO BLAME.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I GOTTA GO HOME AND PICK UP THIS NEW SCORPION SUIT OSBORN ARRANGED FOR ME TO GET.
THOSE OLD BUSINESSMEN MIGHT NOT BE MAKING SUPER-VILLAINS ANYMORE, BUT NORMAN'S STILL COMMITTED AND HE'S BEEN REVAMPING ALL YOUR MAJOR ENEMIES FOR MONTHS.
NO KINGPIN OUT THERE TO BUST YOUR STONES ANYMORE? THAT'S WHY HE'S BEEN MAKING THE OWL INTO A PLAYER.
THAT STUPID GREEN SUIT I USED TO RUN AROUND IN? THAT'S WHY HE HAD HIS DOCTOR FRIENDS DOUBLE MY STRENGTH AND NOW I CAN DO NEW FANCY TRICKS LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR POWERS. I DON'T CARE ABOUT THIS UPGRADE OSBORN'S GIVEN YOU. I'M NOT GOING TO BREAK THE LAW FOR HIM, GARGAN.
SURE YOU ARE.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
BECAUSE I THINK YOU'VE BURIED ENOUGH FRIENDS OVER THE YEARS.
DON'T YOU?

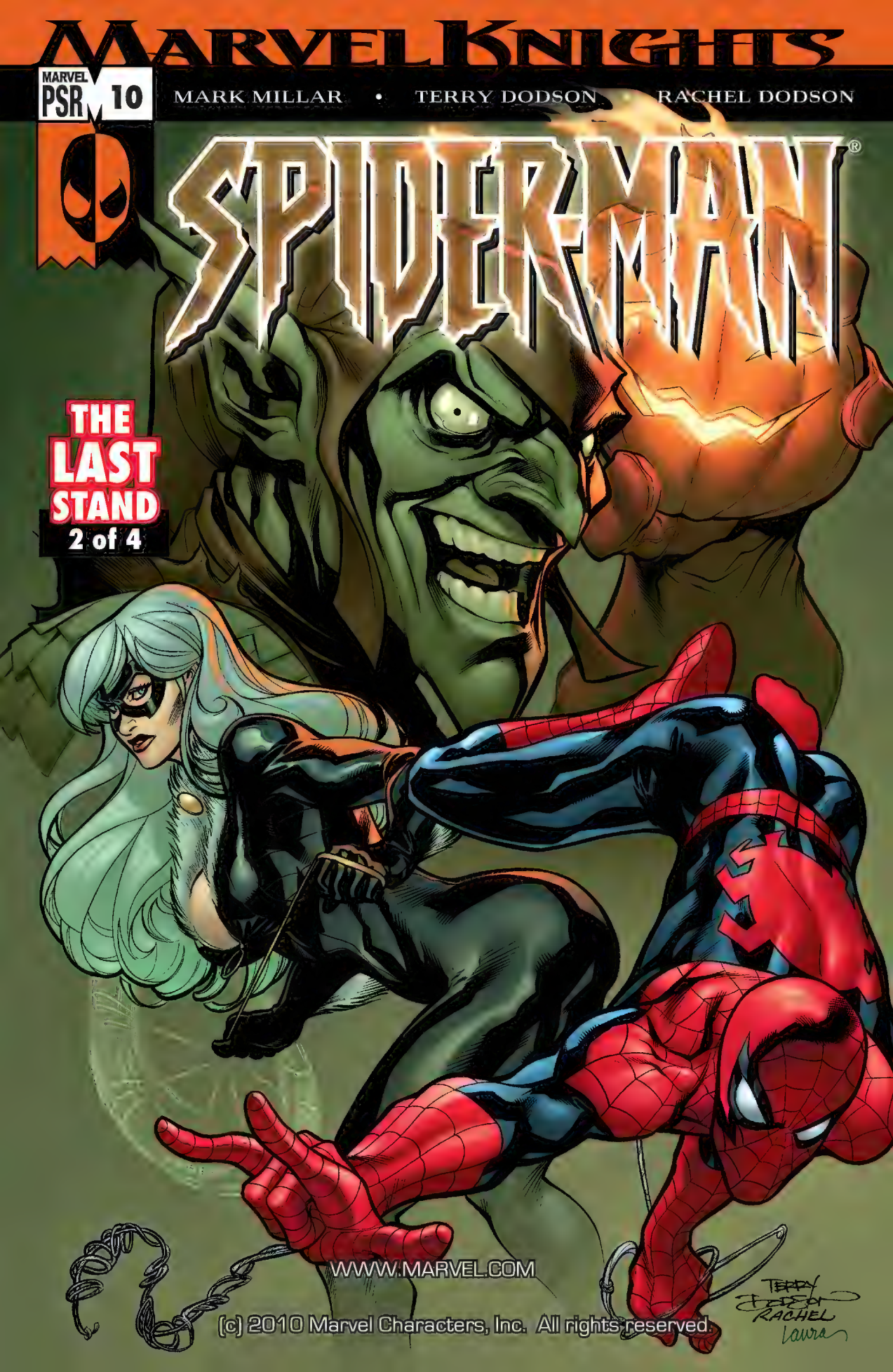



She's dead. She's dead already. This is just Osborn PLAYING with you, Parker. This is just one of his MIND-GAMES.
But what if it's not? What if he's telling THE TRUTH and Aunt May is just sitting in a room somewhere and crying for her HEART PILLS?
I go to the cops and she's DEAD. I go to the super-people and she's DEAD. Oh, God. What am I going to DO?
HEY, MISTER PARKER. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
HUMBERTO? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
YOU SAID TO MEET YOU OUTSIDE YOUR APARTMENT AT FOUR PM SO WE COULD GO OVER THAT CHEMISTRY STUFF FOR THE PAPER TOMORROW.
I BEEN SITTING HERE A COUPLE OF HOURS, MISTER PARKER. I CAN'T EVEN FEEL MY BUTT ANYMORE.
OH, GOD. I'M SORRY, BUDDY. SOMETHING CAME UP AND THINGS HAVE BEEN KINDA CRAZY TODAY. COULD WE TAKE A RAIN-CHECK ON THIS? COULD YOU COME BACK TOMORROW AT THE SAME TIME?
BUT THE PAPER'S DUE TOMORROW AND I BEEN WAITING HERE A COUPLE OF HOURS ALREADY, MISTER PARKER. COULDN'T WE JUST TAKE TEN MINUTES? EVEN JUST TO COVER THE CATALYST STUFF?
PLEASE?

OKAY, YOU GOT TEN MINUTES, HUMBERTO. NOW WHERE DID WE LEAVE OFF LAST TIME? WAS IT THE ENZYME CHAPTER?
NAH, IT'S ALL THIS CATALYST AND INHIBITOR STUFF. I WAS OFF A COUPLE OF DAYS WHEN YOU COVERED THAT CHAPTER SO I KEEP GETTING MIXED UP.
IS A CATALYST USED TO PREVENT A CHEMICAL REACTION OR IS THAT WHAT AN INHIBITOR DOES?
MISTER PARKER? ARE YOU OKAY?
UH, SURE, HUMBERTO. FINE, JUST FINE.
NOW LET'S GO BACK AND TAKE A LOOK AT THIS CHAPTER FROM THE BEGINNING, HUH?


THE HOME OF MAC GARGAN:
WOW. I LOVE THE NEW COSTUME THEY SENT YOU, MAC. I HEAR THIS NEW TAIL THEY BUILT CAN TAKE DOWN A WINNEBAGO. NOW AND THOSE COOL STRIPES ON YOUR CHEST ARE TO DIE FOR.
WHAT?
YOU REALLY THINK THIS IS GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO YOUR PATHETIC CAREER? YOU REALLY THINK A NEW TAIL THAT SMASHES BIGGER OBJECTS IS GOING TO PUT YOU ON THE MAP AGAIN?
WHO IS THIS? WHO'S SAYING THAT?
ME? OH, I'M YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND, MAC. I'M YOUR TICKET OUT OF THE GUTTER.
JUST SAY THE WORD AND NOBODY'S EVER GOING TO LAUGH AT YOU AGAIN, MISTER SCORPION. AREN'T YOU EMBARRASSED HOW YOUR BODY LOOKS AFTER ALL THOSE PAINFUL OPERATIONS?
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND I AIN'T INTERESTED, CREEP. I GOT ENOUGH BEST FRIENDS.
OH, BUT MAC, MAC, MAC...

...YOU NEVER HAD A FRIEND LIKE ME BEFORE.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TERRY DODSON
RACHEL
Laura

PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"LAST STAND"

PART II OF IV

His beloved Aunt May has been kidnapped, his secret identity has been compromised, and now Peter Parker has been delivered an ultimatum, courtesy of Mac Gargan, a.k.a. The Scorpion: either he breaks his arch-foe, Norman Osborn, out of Riker's Island prison...or May dies.

It appears that Osborn is at the heart of a conspiracy involving super-humans that dates back more than 60 years, and this secret has put his life at risk. If Osborn isn't freed soon, he will be murdered in his jail cell.

Peter, already on the brink of a mental and physical collapse, refuses. He's not a criminal-- he won't break the law. But if his only hope of saving his Aunt May is to free Norman....what choice does he really have?

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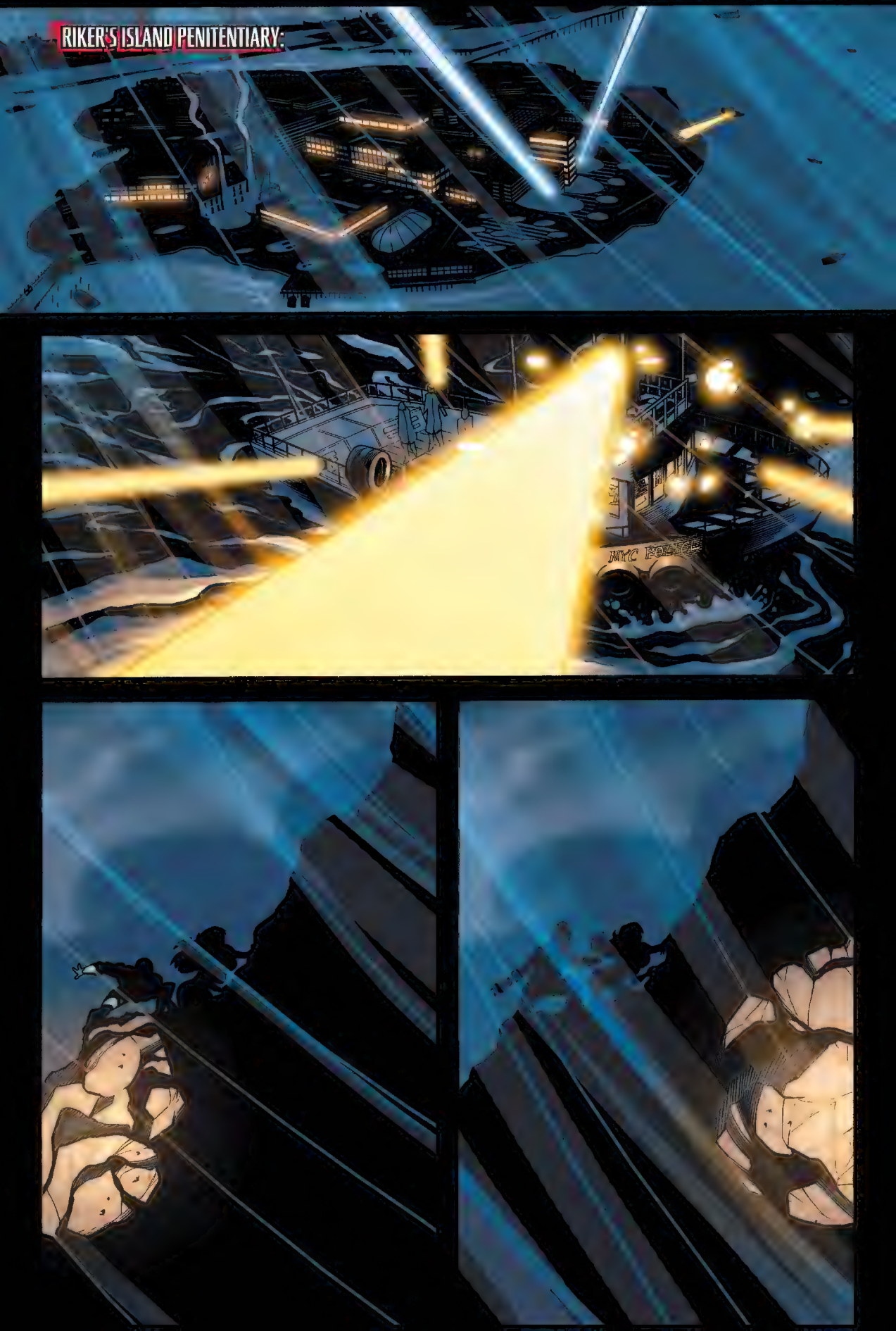
Uncle Ben, I am so sorry.
THE LAST STAND
PART TWO OF FOUR

They might have fixed your gravestone, they might have swapped the turf and planted a few flowers, but I can still tell that you're angry with me and you have every REASON to be angry.
I'm sorry about you, sorry about Gwen and sorry about this awful situation Aunt May is in because of me and this stupid mask.
But most of all I'm sorry for what I'm about to do next.
I made a promise when you died and now I'm about to BREAK that promise. But I don't have a choice, Uncle Ben.
This is my one and only chance of making sure Aunt May doesn't end up out here with all the OTHER people I've let down over the years.
I hope you find it in your heart to forgive me for the line I'm about to cross tonight.
There's honestly just no other way to SAVE her.

HUUURRKK!
MJ, PLEASE. I'M FEELING BAD ENOUGH ABOUT THIS AS IT IS.
PTUI!
AND SO YOU SHOULD. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO HERE, PETER? SHAKE YOUR HAND?
YOU'RE BREAKING SOMEBODY OUT OF PRISON, FOR GOD'S SAKE. YOU'RE BREAKING THE GREEN GOBLIN OUT OF PRISON.
IT'S LIKE THE SCORPION SAID: IF I BREAK HIM OUT, THERE'S ALWAYS THE RISK THAT SOMEBODY'S GOING TO GET HURT. BUT IF I DON'T BREAK HIM OUT, IT'S AN ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE.
THIS IS THE ONE AND ONLY WAY HE'S GOING TO SHOW ME WHERE HE'S LOCKED UP AUNT MAY.
BESIDES, PETER'S THE ONLY REASON OSBORN'S EVEN IN PRISON, RIGHT? IF HE BREAKS HIM OUT, ALL HE'S DOING IS RETURNING THINGS TO THE WAY THEY WERE THREE MONTHS AGO.
WHAT KIND OF STUPID JUSTIFICATION IS THAT? AND SINCE WHEN DID WE START TAKING ADVICE FROM SOMEBODY WHO DRESSES UP LIKE A CAT AND BURGLARIZES PEOPLE?
I HAVEN'T BURGLARIZED ANYBODY IN EIGHTEEN MONTHS.
OH, SHUT UP, FELICIA. THINGS ARE COMPLICATED ENOUGH WITHOUT YOU HANGING AROUND. WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO AND FIND YOURSELF A BOYFRIEND, HUH?
MARY JANE!

I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S TRUE. EVERY TIME SHE SHOWS UP, SHE TURNS OUR LIVES UPSIDE DOWN. OF COURSE SHE THINKS IT'S A GOOD IDEA. SHE USED TO SLEEP IN THE NEXT CELL OVER.
PETER, I'M NOT TRYING TO INTERFERE, BUT WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE HERE AND DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ALL THIS GARBAGE.
CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT OSBORN'S DOING, PETER? HE'S JUST PULLING THE STRINGS AND MAKING YOU DANCE LIKE AN IDIOT AGAIN. HE'S EVEN TRYING TO RUIN THINGS BETWEEN YOU AND ME NOW.
PLEASE DON'T DO THIS.
PLEASE... HE'S TOO SMART.
IT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME. DOCTOR OCTOPUS HAS BEEN BRAINWASHED TO KILL HIM THIS WEEKEND AND HE'S VULNERABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE.
HE PROMISED ME HE'D BEHAVE AND, FOR SOME REASON, I THINK HE'S TOO SCARED TO BE LYING THIS TIME.
BESIDES... THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO SAVE AUNT MAY.
I'M SORRY.

PLEASE, GOD, LET ME BE WRONG ABOUT ALL THIS...


RIKER'S ISLAND PENITENTIARY:
NYC POLICE

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ONCE HE'S OUT THERE AGAIN? ABOUT YOUR SECRET IDENTITY, I MEAN. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE SURE NOTHING LIKE THIS EVER HAPPENS IN THE FUTURE?
WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM.
WHAT?
ONCE I GET AUNT MAY BACK, I'M GIVING SPIDER-MAN UP, TELLING THE COPS WHO I AM, AND THE WHOLE FAMILY IS GOING INTO THE WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM.
SERIOUSLY?
WHAT ELSE AM I GOING TO DO? THIS JUST PROVES IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO MESS AROUND ANYMORE.
THANKS FOR PUTTING THESE OUTFITS TOGETHER, BY THE WAY. THEY'RE NICE AND LOOSE SO IT'S HARD TO EVEN MAKE OUT WHAT SIZE WE ARE. JUST NEED TO REMEMBER NOT TO USE MY WEB-SHOOTERS.
DID I TELL YOU I WAS GOING TO MAKE US DAREDEVIL AND ELEKTRA COSTUMES? JUST TO GET A RISE OUT OF MATT?
OH, MAN. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN PRICELESS. CAN YOU IMAGINE THEIR FACES? THEY'D HAVE GONE ABSOLUTELY NUTS.
GOD, HOW CAN I LAUGH AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
PETER, BEFORE WE DO THIS--I JUST WANT TO SAY SOMETHING.
S'UP?

I JUST WANT YOU TO REALIZE I'M READY TO DO THIS BY MYSELF IF YOU DON'T WANT TO CROSS THIS LINE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, YOU'RE A MUCH BETTER *PERSON* THAN I AM, PETER. I'M NOT BEING MODEST HERE. YOU JUST ARE AND WE BOTH KNOW IT.
YOU'RE ALSO A SUPER HERO AND, AS MUCH AS I'M TRYING, I'M NEVER REALLY GOING TO BE ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS LIKE YOU OR CAPTAIN AMERICA OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
I JUST DON'T WANT YOU TO COMPROMISE EVERYTHING I LOVE ABOUT YOU WHEN I COULD DO THIS BY MYSELF.
MY CONSCIENCE COULD HANDLE A JOB LIKE THIS, BUT I'M NOT SURE *YOURS* CAN. I JUST DON'T WANT YOU DOING SOMETHING YOU'LL REGRET FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
A HUNDRED PERCENT SERIOUS.
C'MON, LET'S GO SEE IF THE SCORPION'S PLANS FOR THIS PLACE ARE AS GOOD AS THEY LOOKED ON PAPER.

LISTEN, NOBODY'S ASKING YOU TO DO ANYTHING ILLEGAL HERE, HAYDN. ALL WE'RE ASKING YOU TO DO IS LOOK THE OTHER WAY FOR A SECOND.
YOU CAN SAY YOU WERE ON ANOTHER TOILET-BREAK. JUST BLAME IT ON YOUR PROSTATITIS.
I DUNNO, MAN. I MEAN, MY HEART GOES OUT TO SCOTTY AND EVERYTHING, BUT I GOT A WIFE AND KIDS TO THINK ABOUT. IF I LOSE THIS JOB...
YOU'RE NOT GONNA LOSE YOUR JOB, HAYDN. WE'RE THE ONES PULLING THE TRIGGERS DOWN THERE. ALL WE'RE ASKING YOU TO DO IS LOOK THE OTHER WAY, FOR GOD'S SAKES.
BESIDES, YOU REALLY THINK WE AIN'T GONNA BE HEROES AFTER THIS? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAS OSBORN KILLED? THEY'LL END UP GIVING US A FRIGGIN' MEDAL FOR PULLING THIS OFF.
BUT I GOT A WIFE...
SCOTTY HAD A WIFE TOO UNTIL THAT PIECE OF CRAP POISONED HER AND PUT HER IN THE GROUND.
IT'S HIS FIRST NIGHT BACK SINCE THE FUNERAL, HAYDN, AND HE REALLY NEEDS US TO HELP HIM OUT HERE, MAN.
WHAT'S A RIFLE GONNA DO TO OSBORN ANYWAY? HIS SKIN'S SUPPOSED TO BE BULLETPROOF, RIGHT?
SOME BULLETS ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS, BUDDY. THESE NEW ASSAULT RIFLES WE BEEN ISSUED TOOK A CHUNK OUTTA THE RHINO'S BUTT JUST LAST WEEK.

WHAT'S THE WORD?
GOOD TO GO, PETER. I'VE PAUSED ALL THE SECURITY CAMERAS ACROSS THE ROUTE THE SCORPION LAID OUT FOR YOU.
TRIP-SENSORS GAVE ME A LITTLE TROUBLE, BUT YOU'RE CLEAR TO TOUCH THE WALLS AND FLOOR FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER TWENTY MINUTES.
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE SUCH AN *EGGHEAD*, MISS KYLE.
BENEFITS OF A GOOD CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION, MISTER PARKER. THE SCORPION'S *SCHEMATIC* WORKING OUT FOR YOU DOWN THERE?
RIGHT DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL. MAN, IS THAT *BLACKIE DRAGO* IN THERE?
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE HE WAS DOING THE WHOLE *VULTURE* THING A FEW YEARS BACK. IS HE *STILL* LOCKED UP?
WE REALLY MEET SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE IN THIS JOB, DON'T WE?
TELL ME ABOUT IT.

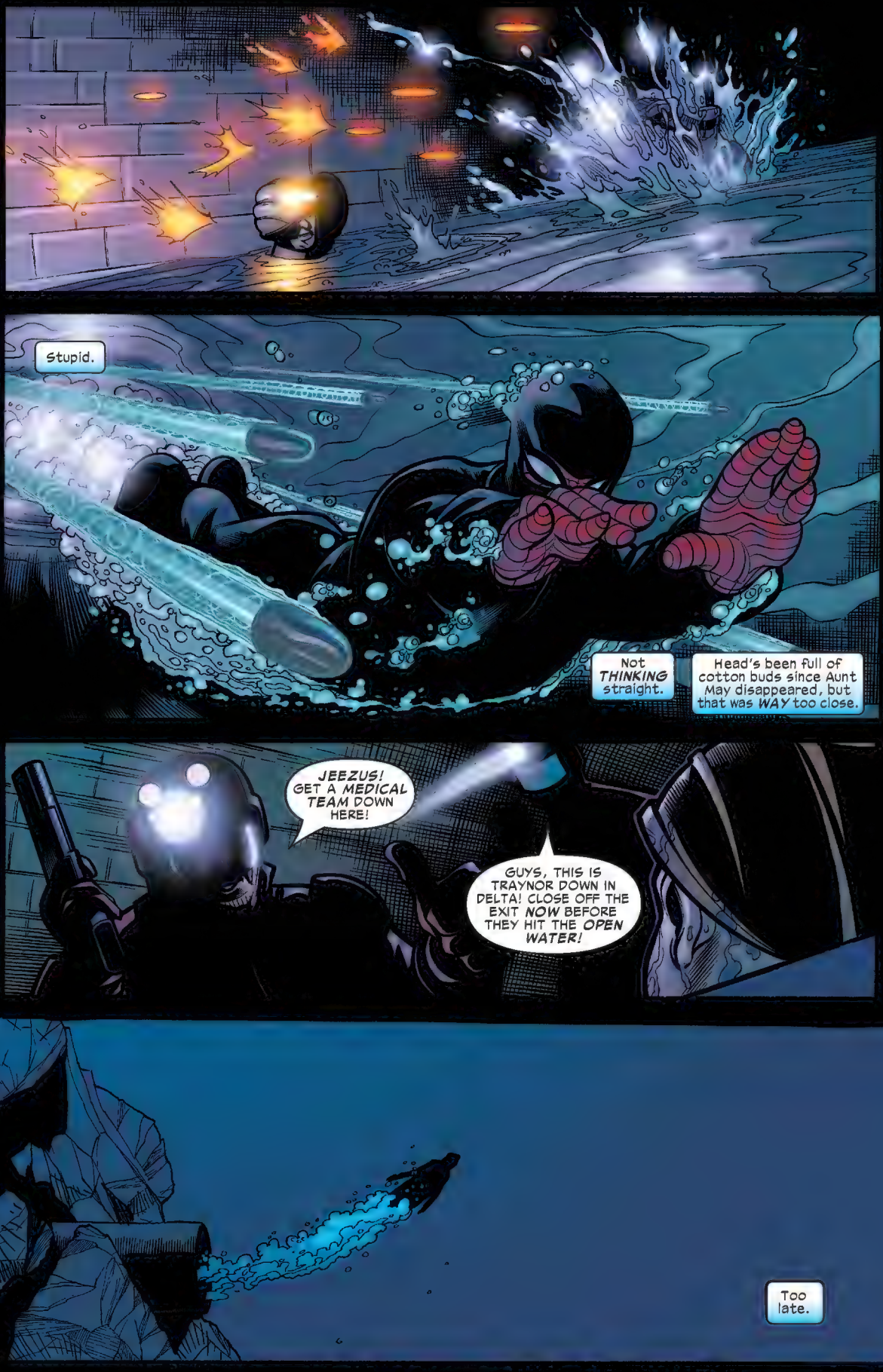
CAN I GET A LITTLE LIGHT IN OSBORN'S CELL?
COMING RIGHT UP...
I HOPE YOU REALIZE YOU'RE NINETY SECONDS BEHIND SCHEDULE?
JUST SHUT UP AND GET OUT OF THERE BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND.

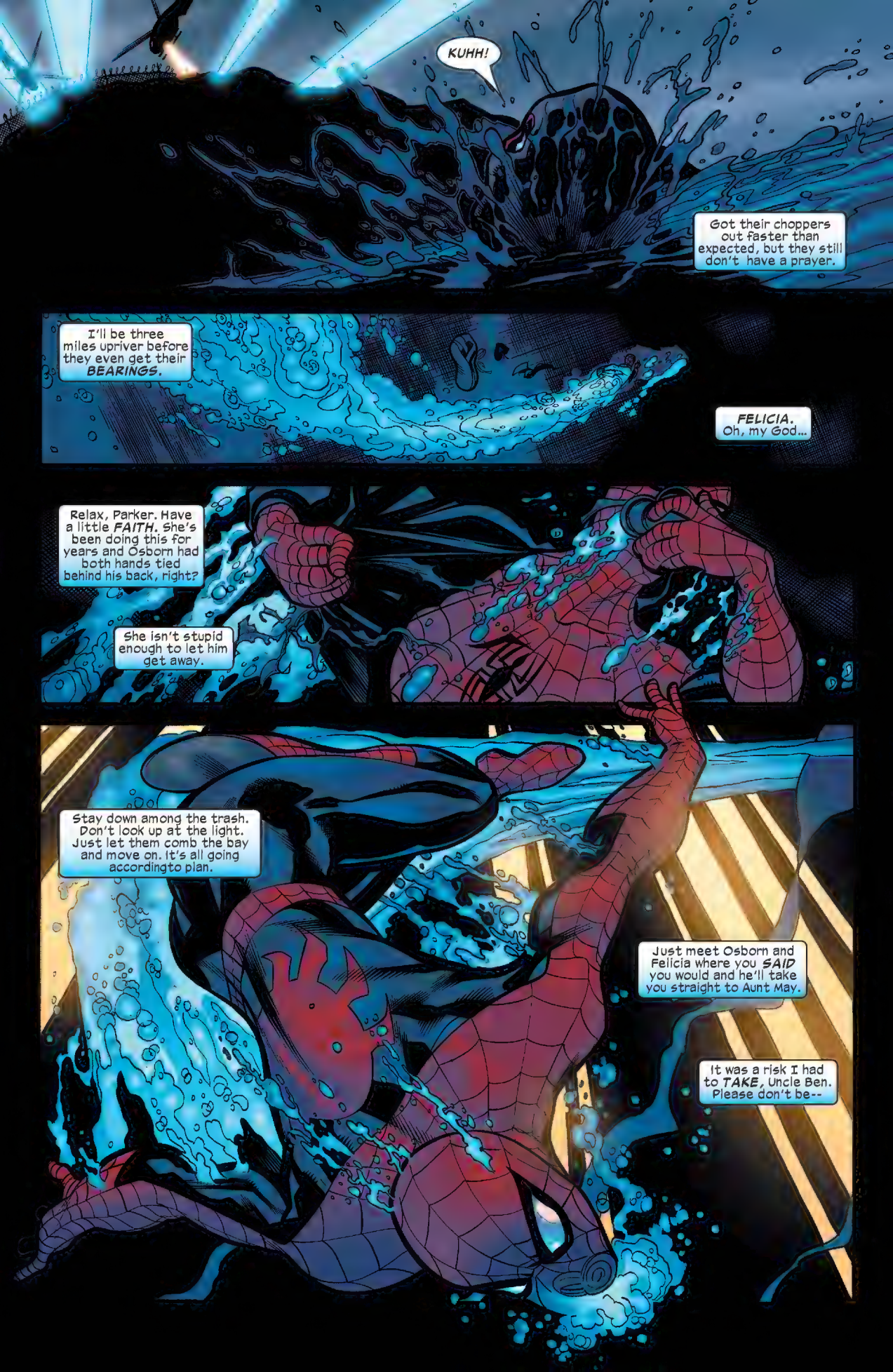
WANT TO LET YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE THIS, GUYS. THE WARDEN SAID I COULD TAKE ANOTHER COUPLE OF MONTHS IF I LIKE, BUT WHAT GOOD'S LYING AROUND THE HOUSE GONNA DO ME?
I GOTTA DO SOMETHING POSITIVE IF I'M GONNA FEEL BETTER AND WHAT COULD BE MORE POSITIVE THAN EMPTYING A SHELL RIGHT IN THE FACE OF THAT PIECE OF CRAP SLEEPING IN THERE?
DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO ME AFTERWARDS. NOTHING'S GONNA MAKE ME FEEL WORSE THAN I FEEL NOW ANYWAY.
JUST REMEMBER, WE'RE RIGHT BEHIND YOU, SCOTTY. MONITOR ROOM BOYS TOO.
THE WHOLE DAMN PLACE WANTS THIS BUM TO SUFFER FOR WHAT HE DID TO BARBARA. ONLY *RIGHT* YOU SHOULD GET YOUR REVENGE.
THANKS, MAN. APPRECIATED.
TONY, COULD WE GET SOME LIGHTS IN FOUR-FIVE-ONE?

WHERE THE HELL'S HE GONE?
HAYDN, WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN HERE? SOMEBODY MOVE NORMAN OSBORN?
THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? OSBORN'S SITTING THERE DOING A JIGSAW IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM.
HADYN, SERIOUSLY. OSBORN ISN'T IN THIS CELL.
I'M TELLING YOU, MAN! HE'S SITTING IN HIS CHAIR AND DOING A JIGSAW! I'M LOOKING AT HIM RIGHT NOW!
OH, MY GOD.
WHAT?
HIT THE ALARMS!

EEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEEOOOOOWEEEE
YOU CRETINS. I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU HAD THIS COVERED.
OH, SHUT UP AND STOP COMPLAINING, OSBORN.
JUST GET ME OUT OF THESE CUFFS SO I CAN RUN PROPERLY.
AFTER YOU SHOW ME WHERE YOU GOT AUNT MAY LOCKED UP, SMART-GUY.
HEY!
WHO THE HECK ARE YOU?
AW, GREAT...

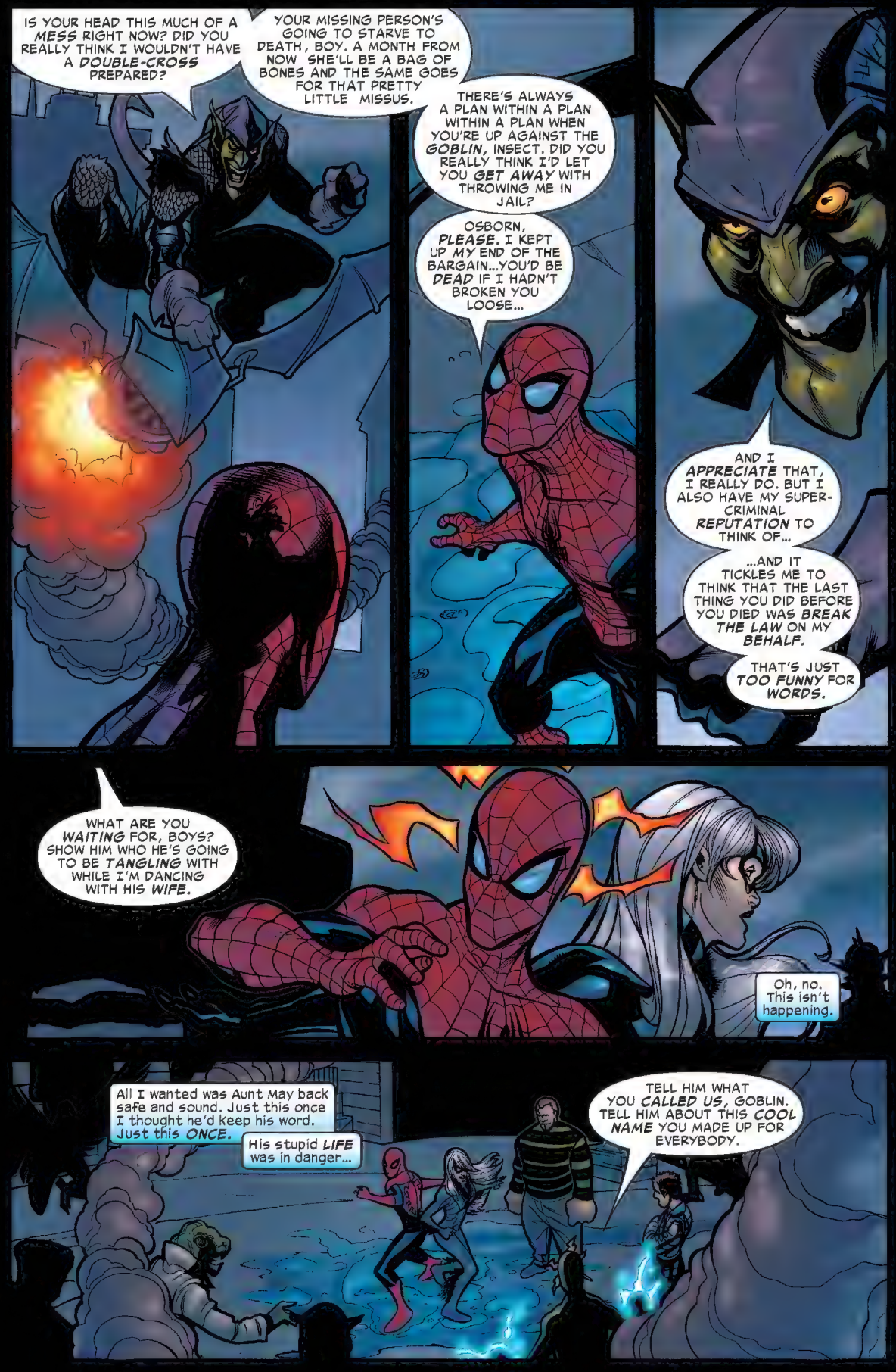
GUYS! LISTEN UP! IT'S JODIE DOWN IN DELTA TUNNEL! TELL THE C.O.S I GOT THE BREAK-OUTS! THEY'RE STANDING RIGHT HERE IN--
RRRRRR~
HUHHNN!!
OSBORN!
FELICIA! GET AFTER HIM!
OH, MAN. LET ME SEE. LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT YOU HERE. CAN YOU TALK? CAN YOU BREATHE OKAY?
JUST DON'T TRY TO MOVE AND I'LL RADIO FOR--
FREEZE!
HE'S OKAY! I THINK HE JUST BROKE A COUPLE OF--


Stupid.
Not THINKING straight.
Head's been full of cotton buds since Aunt May disappeared, but that was WAY too close.
JEEZUS! GET A MEDICAL TEAM DOWN HERE!
GUYS, THIS IS TRAYNOR DOWN IN DELTA! CLOSE OFF THE EXIT NOW BEFORE THEY HIT THE OPEN WATER!
Too late.


KUHH!
Got their choppers out faster than expected, but they still don't have a prayer.
I'll be three miles upriver before they even get their BEARINGS.
FELICIA. Oh, my God...
Relax, Parker. Have a little FAITH. She's been doing this for years and Osborn had both hands tied behind his back, right?
She isn't stupid enough to let him get away.
Stay down among the trash. Don't look up at the light. Just let them comb the bay and move on. It's all going accordingto plan.
Just meet Osborn and Felicia where you SAID you would and he'll take you straight to Aunt May.
It was a risk I had to TAKE, Uncle Ben. Please don't be--

What the--?
Oh, my God.
Oh, my God.
Oh, my God.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, SPIDER-MAN? SWALLOW A LITTLE WATER?
HYDRO-MAN... YOU IDIOT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
MAKING FIFTY GRAND AN HOUR, MORON. JUST LIKE THE SANDMAN'S MAKIN' FOR THIS LITTLE SHINDIG.
I'M SORRY, BABY. ONE OF THEM I COULD HAVE TAKEN ON MY OWN, BUT...
OH, PLEASE, FELICIA. SPARE ME.
OH, MY GOD!
YOU KNOW YOUR TROUBLE, SPIDER-MAN? YOU ALWAYS THINK THE BEST OF PEOPLE.
YOU ALWAYS THINK THAT EVERYONE IS JUST AS NICE AS YOU ARE.


IS YOUR HEAD THIS MUCH OF A MESS RIGHT NOW? DID YOU REALLY THINK I WOULDN'T HAVE A DOUBLE-CROSS PREPARED?
YOUR MISSING PERSON'S GOING TO STARVE TO DEATH, BOY. A MONTH FROM NOW SHE'LL BE A BAG OF BONES AND THE SAME GOES FOR THAT PRETTY LITTLE MISSUS.
THERE'S ALWAYS A PLAN WITHIN A PLAN WITHIN A PLAN WHEN YOU'RE UP AGAINST THE GOBLIN, INSECT. DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THROWING ME IN JAIL?
OSBORN, PLEASE. I KEPT UP MY END OF THE BARGAIN...YOU'D BE DEAD IF I HADN'T BROKEN YOU LOOSE...
AND I APPRECIATE THAT, I REALLY DO. BUT I ALSO HAVE MY SUPER-CRIMINAL REPUTATION TO THINK OF...
...AND IT TICKLES ME TO THINK THAT THE LAST THING YOU DID BEFORE YOU DIED WAS BREAK THE LAW ON MY BEHALF.
THAT'S JUST TOO FUNNY FOR WORDS.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, BOYS? SHOW HIM WHO HE'S GOING TO BE TANGLING WITH WHILE I'M DANCING WITH HIS WIFE.
Oh, no. This isn't happening.
All I wanted was Aunt May back safe and sound. Just this once I thought he'd keep his word. Just this ONCE.
His stupid LIFE was in danger...
TELL HIM WHAT YOU CALLED US, GOBLIN. TELL HIM ABOUT THIS COOL NAME YOU MADE UP FOR EVERYBODY.

WELL, I THOUGHT *THE SINISTER TWELVE* HAD A CERTAIN *CURIOUS APPEAL.*

JUST A SHAME *THE SCORPION* NEVER APPEARED.

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME, NORMAN. I JUST GOT HELD UP--
SCORPION?
THIS IS SPIDER-MAN'S LAST STAND, RIGHT?
I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED THAT FOR THE WORLD.

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PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"LAST STAND"

PART III OF IV

His beloved Aunt May has been kidnapped, his secret identity has been compromised, and now—in hopes of saving his Aunt's life—Peter Parker has been forced to break into Riker's Island prison to free his arch-nemesis, Norman Osborn, a.k.a. the Green Goblin.

It appears that Norman is at the heart of a conspiracy involving superhumans that dates back more than 60 years, and this secret has put his life at risk. And, on the very night Norman is supposed to be murdered, Spider-Man, with the help of the Black Cat, breaks him out of Riker's...

But, as the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished.

Norman betrays Spider-Man and has a group of elite super-villains from Spider-Man's past—THE SINISTER 12—ready to meet the web-slinger just after the breakout...

Now, Spidey and the Black Cat find themselves surrounded by bloodthirsty psychopaths...

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THE LAST STAND
PART THREE OF FOUR
SCORPION? IS THAT YOU?
I'M NOT THE SCORPION ANYMORE, NORMAN. I'M VENOM. THE NEW VENOM. HOW DO YOU LIKE THE ALIEN SUIT? ISN'T THIS INCREDIBLE?

WHAT?
NO, IT'S NOT INCREDIBLE. THIS WASN'T PART OF THE PLAN, GARGAN. THE PLAN WAS THAT YOU'D BE WEARING THE NEW SCORPION SUIT I'D PUT ALL THAT TIME AND EFFORT INTO.
I ARRANGE THESE PLOTS IN PHENOMENAL DETAIL AND YOU BECOMING VENOM PLAYED NO PART IN MY EQUATIONS.
NORMAN, LISTEN. I'VE GOTTA SAY, I THINK YOU'RE COMPLETELY OVERREACTING HERE. ALL I'VE DONE IS MAKE MYSELF MORE POWERFUL. THIS CAN ONLY BE GOOD FOR WHAT YOU GOT PLANNED.
REALLY? YOU REALLY THINK SO? OH, WELL. THAT'S FINE THEN, ISN'T IT?
MORON.
IT'S NOT THE FACT THAT YOU'RE WRONG HERE, GARGAN. IT'S THE FACT THAT YOU DEFIED ME.
WE'LL DISCUSS THIS FURTHER ONCE I'VE MURDERED SPIDER-MAN'S PRETTY LITTLE WIFE.
NORMAN, FOR GOD'S SAKE...

Everyone's distracted. There's never going to be a better time...
HIT THEM, FELICIA! NOW!
Make it COUNT, baby.
NGH!
This isn't just about Aunt May anymore. He's going to kill Mary Jane. Gut her? Shoot her? Toss her off a building? He's going to kill Mary Jane just like he killed GWEN.
OH GOD, WOULD SOMEBODY JUST HIT THIS CLOWN?
RELAX, CHAMELEON. I'M ON IT.
NO!

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, HONEY.
AIGNH!
MAX! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO LEAVE BLACK CAT TO ME.
WE TALKED ABOUT THIS ALL THE WAY HERE, YOU IDIOT. THIS WAS MY BIG REVENGE FOR WHAT SHE DID TO MY FACE.
OKAY, SO WE SIT TIGHT UNTIL SHE COMES AROUND AND THEN YOU GET YOUR BIG REVENGE, ADRIAN. NO NEED TO HAVE A HEART ATTACK, MAN.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT. SHE COULD BE BRAIN-DAMAGED AFTER A CHARGE LIKE THAT. WHERE'S THE FUN IN MESSING HER UP IF SHE'S ALREADY FRIGGIN' BRAIN-DAMAGED?
SO TAKE IT OUT ON SPIDER-MAN, VULTURE. HE'S THE ONE WHO LOST ALL YOUR GRANDSON'S MONEY. HE'S THE ONE YOU SHOULD BE ANGRY WITH.
YEAH. GOOD POINT, SHOCKER. DAMN GOOD POINT.
GONNA HAVE TO WAIT YOUR TURN, OLD MAN. I BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS SINCE THAT WISE GUY BROKE MY NOSE DURING DOC OCK'S SWEET NUPTIALS A FEW YEARS BACK.
I WANNA REMIND HIM ABOUT THAT MUNITIONS SHED THING. HURT LIKE HELL WHEN THAT PLACE WENT UP...
HEAR THAT, SPIDER-MAN? THEY ALL WANT A PIECE OF YOU NOW. AND YOU KNOW WHAT? THEY'RE GONNA GET IT.
WE'RE GONNA CARVE OUR NAMES IN YOUR CORPSE AND HANG IT FROM THE NEAREST FLAGPOLE.

YOU'VE NO IDEA HOW GOOD IT FEELS HAVING THE SYMBIOTE INSIDE ME. ALL THOSE YEARS OF BEING B-LIST GAVE ME ENOUGH PAIN AND RESENTMENT TO FEED THIS BEAST FOR A LIFETIME.
TELL HIM WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO TO HIM, GARGAN. TELL HIM WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO HIM, HUH?
YOU'RE GONNA DIE TONIGHT, SPIDER-MAN. OSBORN'S ORDERS.
RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW. AND YOU KNOW WHAT? THAT SKANKY REDHEAD BACK HOME'S GONNA DIE TONIGHT TOO.
OSBORN'S WANTED A CRACK AT HER FOR A LONG TIME...
HOLY--
SHUT UP!
I'm dead.
I'm already lying on that mortuary slab. My name's in the paper. Peter Parker was Spider-Man. Someone is already chiselling my epitaph on a gravestone.
I'm dead and buried and the only real DIFFERENCE I can make is how many of these punks I can take down before they FINISH me.
UNH!

This was never going to end well. I knew that the second I first stood in front of the bedroom mirror in the costume.
This was never going to be the kind of job you could ever just WALK AWAY from.
There's no handshake or gold watch. Just a bullet out of nowhere that's LUCKIER than the rest.
I always knew it would be messy, but not this NASTY.
Out here behind the warehouses with the old men and the freaks just giggling and laughing. The smell of fish and sand, lunatics screeching as they...
Oh, God. I'm sorry, Aunt May. I'm sorry, MJ. All I ever wanted was to make things right, but I've ended up doing the one thing that scared me MOST...
I've let everybody DOWN again.
You're both going to DIE and it's all my FAULT.
ON MY MARK, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--

TAKE 'EM DOWN.

Iron Man?
Daredevil?
The Thing?
Captain America?
What the heck's GOING ON here?
How did they even know where Osborn was MEETING me?
UNGH!
I'M SORRY, PETER. SO SORRY FOR GETTING YOU IN TROUBLE LIKE THIS...

...BUT I HAD TO CALL S.H.I.E.L.D. AND LET THEM KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING OUT THERE. I JUST KNOW OSBORN'S GONNA SCREW YOU OVER HERE. I JUST KNOW IT.
CLEVER GIRL.
JEEZUS!
CAP, I'VE GOTTA GO... I'VE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE...THE GOBLIN'S GOING TO KILL MY WIFE IF I DON'T...
STOP TALKING AND GO, SPIDER-MAN. WE'VE GOT THESE CREEPS UNDER CONTROL AND S.H.I.E.L.D. SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE.
HEADS UP, HONEY--THAT FREAKY KISSER A' YOURS IS JUST ABOUT TO GET A LITTLE UGLIER!

MJ, I know you were BEHIND this somehow. I know you must have made the call that saved our bacon and I PROMISE you, sweetheart...
...I won't let you down. I won't let him HURT you.
University Heights becomes Grand Concourse and Grand Concourse becomes the South Bronx. My hands and feet slap against every high-rise in Manhattan, but it's STILL not fast enough.
I have to keep moving...
Got to get back home and pray I MAKE IT in time...
AAGH!
GARGAN.
Where the hell did HE come from?

LUCKY FOR YOU SOMEONE MADE THAT CALL, SPIDER-MAN.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ANYWAY? A CAT, STUCK IN A TREE? WHAT KINDA SUPER HERO ENDS UP NEEDING RESCUE?
JEEZUS!
MAN, YOU CAN'T EVEN PROTECT YOUR OWN FAMILY. YOU MUST BE THE WORST SUPER HERO EVER.
AGH!
BEHIND ME, HONEY! CALL THE COPS!
Oh, dear God...

HAHAHAHA!
DOWN!
Bullets stream over and he's chuckling like a girl. That weird double-sound when they talk through the suit. Like somebody yelling into a LOUDSPEAKER...
OOH, YOU'RE GETTING ANGRY, HUH? ANGRY 'CUZ I'M WASTING YOUR TIME WHEN YOU SHOULD BE OUT THERE LOOKING AFTER MARY JANE...
What's he DOING?
Suit's firing out in a hundred different directions...

I'M NOT HERE TO KILL YOU, SPIDER-MAN. I'M JUST HERE TO HOLD YOU BACK WHILE OSBORN TAKES YOUR LIFE APART.
Oh, my God. One big TWIST and he'll pull this whole...
All those PEOPLE down there...
Surely he wouldn't...
IT'S SHOWTIME, SUPER HERO!

Oh dear Lord...
Don't listen to him. Don't listen to what he's saying. Just spray.
SPRAY.
From one end of the street to the other.
Just hit those pads and SPRAY like crazy, Parker.
MOTHER OF MERCY...

WAY TO GO, SPIDER-MAN!
YOU THE MAN, DUDE! YOU THE FRIGGIN' MAN!
NOW LET'S SEE YOU KICK THIS PUNK'S @$#, HUH?
SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN.

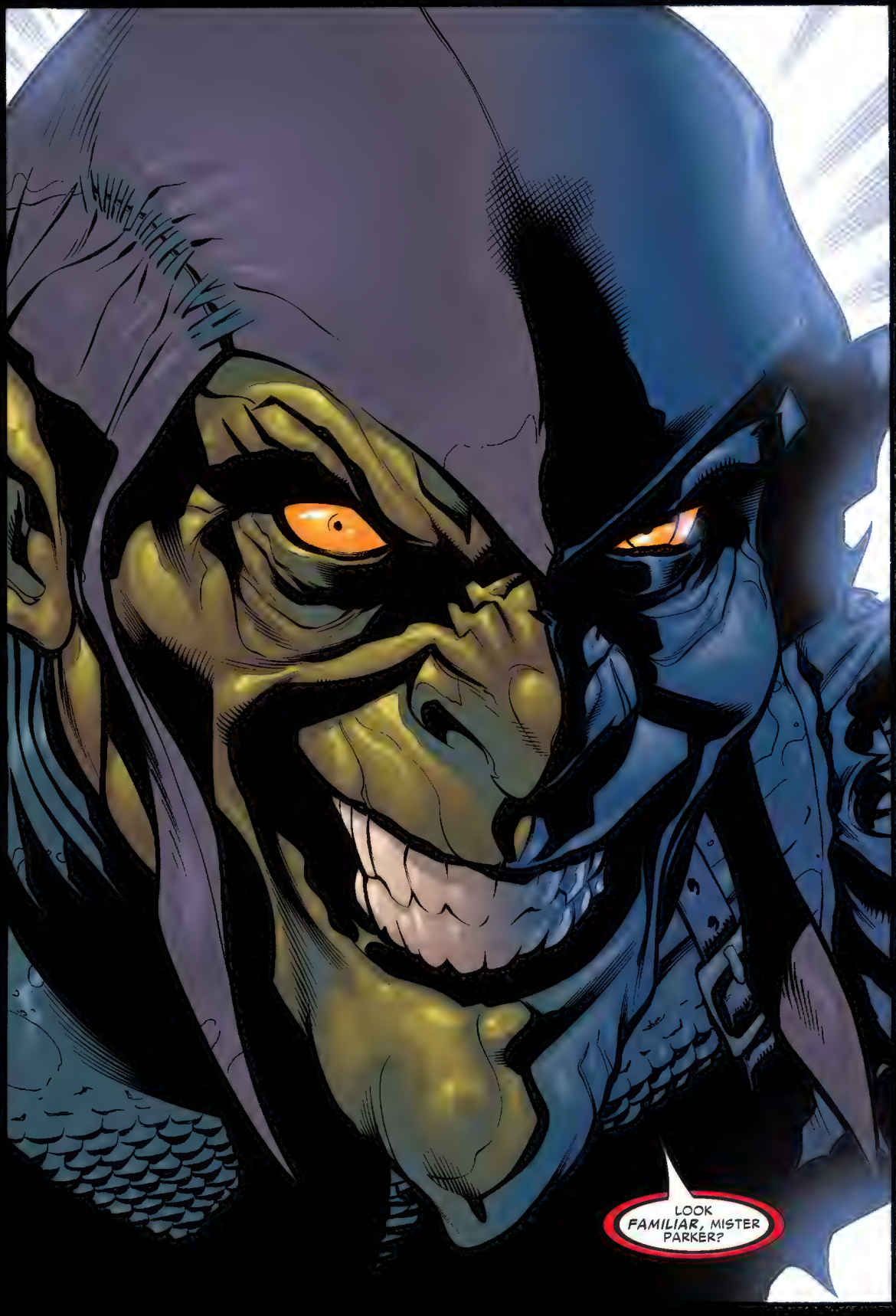
He's spitting out what Norman's doing, but I'm not even listening. He's telling me the people I've watched die could have a cemetery to themselves, but the words barely register.
He's just a B-List punk who's got a shot at the BIG-TIME here. A lackey of The Goblin that suddenly thinks he's got a chance in the MAJOR LEAGUES...
But I've got NEWS for you, man...
MISSED!
A loser dressed like VENOM is still a freakin' LOSER.
OH @!--

Time to get SQUISHED, Scorpion!
Aunt May. Mary Jane. Aunt May. Mary Jane. Got to take a SECOND first. Got to make sure no one else got HURT.
YOU GUYS OKAY?
SURE, SPIDER-MAN. YOU SAVED US. THAT WAS AWESOME, DUDE. GREATEST THING I EVER SAW IN MY LIFE.
Don't stand around. No time to talk. Leave Gargan for the cops. Got to get back home and pray to God Osborn hasn't done much DAMAGE yet...

RIKER'S ISLAND PENITENTIARY:
WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON OUT THERE?
IT'S OSBORN. HE'S ESCAPED. TWO GUYS JUST BROKE HIM OUT AND THE WHOLE PLACE HAS GONE INTO LOCKDOWN.
SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT OTTO OCTAVIUS? HE'S PRIMED TO GO OFF THIS TIME TOMORROW NIGHT...
OSBORN?
HOLY MOTHER OF JEEZUS...!
ESCAPED?
OH MY GOD! HOLD HIM DOWN AND HIT HIM WITH ANOTHER FIFTY MILLS! QUICKLY!
RELAX! HE'S LOADED! I SHOT HIM UP WITH A HUNDRED, JUST TO BE SURE, BUT WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING COMING IN SHOOTING YOUR MOUTH OFF LIKE THAT?
HE ASKED WHAT WAS UP AND I TOLD HIM, MAN. I THOUGHT DOC OCK WAS SUPPOSED TO BE UNDER CONTROL, ANYWAY.
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. HE'S BEEN PROGRAMMED WITH A MISSION, BUT IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BALANCE. WE DON'T WANT HIM SO DOPED UP HE CAN'T REMEMBER HIS NAME.
JUST BE GLAD WE DON'T PUT YOU ON REPORT FOR THIS, MULLIGAN. COMING IN HERE AND...

OSBORN ESCAPING? OH, THAT WON'T DO AT ALL...
THIS REQUIRES A PLAN WITH SOME SERIOUS LEGS.

Apartment's empty. No sign of a struggle. Is she dead? Did he KILL her? Keep a clear head, Parker. No use to anyone if you're freaking out. Just close your eyes and trust your instincts...
...just like you did when he disappeared with GWEN.
Why are you PUSHING me like this, Osborn?
You're raising the game to a level I just can't HANDLE here...
MARY JANE?


LOOK FAMILIAR, MISTER PARKER?

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THE LAST STAND
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PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"LAST STAND"

PART IV OF IV

Incarcerated and exposed as the Green Goblin, Norman Osborn vowed he would have his revenge upon Spider-Man. Their game raised to new and more dangerous levels, Norman has attacked Peter Parker where he's most vulnerable and now threatens to shatter his private life forever before a brainwashed Doctor Octopus eventually catches up with him. Aunt May was kidnapped three months ago, her disappearance used to provoke Peter into crossing all the lines he swore he would never cross in an effort to stay one step ahead of his revamped gallery of villains. Now Osborn, sprung from prison by Spider-Man himself, threatens the life of Mary Jane Parker in a grisly echo of Gwen Stacy's murder. Will Spider-Man's wife meet the same fate as his first love, or will the Goblin die again tonight?

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THE LAST STAND
PART FOUR OF FOUR
THINK YOU'LL MISS MARY JANE AS MUCH AS YOU'VE MISSED GWEN, SPIDER-MAN?
I PICKED A NEW BRIDGE JUST FOR HER, YOU KNOW.

OSBORN, PLEASE. YOU'RE FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD.
THIS IS INSANE.
YOU'RE A FIFTY-FIVE YEAR OLD MAN.
SAYS THE HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER WHO DRESSES UP LIKE A SPIDER EVERY NIGHT.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU'D AMOUNT TO SO MUCH MORE THAN THIS, PETER. YOU INVENTED WEB-FLUID WHEN YOU WERE A TEENAGER, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.
ALL THOSE BRAINS GOING TO WASTE ON THESE ADOLESCENT BRAWLS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE TWICE AS SMART AS I AM.
YOU COULD HAVE CURED CANCER BY NOW IF YOU HADN'T WASTED YOUR TIME WITH THIS GREEN GOBLIN CRAP!
AH, BUT THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, PARKER--
THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS.

YOU'VE ALREADY KILLED AUNT MAY, OSBORN. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?
OH, YE OF LITTLE FAITH: AUNT MAY'S JUST BEEN ANAESTHETIZED AND SLEEPING IN HER OWN MESS FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS.
OF COURSE, SHE'LL RUN OUT OF DRUGS IN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AND CHOKE ON HER OWN VOMIT, BUT SHE'S HARDLY DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN YET, YOUNG SIR.
TICK-TOCK. TICK-TOCK. THE STAKES ARE ESPECIALLY HIGH TONIGHT, SPIDER-MAN, BUT YOU ONLY HAVE YOURSELF TO BLAME.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE RAISED THE STAKES AND HAD ME CAPTURED AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS NOW IS ENTIRELY SELF-INFLICTED.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?
PICK UP EXACTLY WHERE WE LEFT OFF AFTER I ESCAPED FROM CAGE, OF COURSE: YOU FORFEITING YOUR OWN LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR THE LIFE OF AN INNOCENT.
WHY? WHAT'S THE POINT?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THIS, NORMAN?
BECAUSE HEROES NEED VILLAINS TO KEEP THEM IN CHECK, PETER. OTHERWISE, YOU END UP WITH ANT-MAN RUNNING THE FEDERAL RESERVE.
WHY DO YOU THINK I GAVE ALL THOSE WITLESS GOONS A FACE-LIFT? WHY DO YOU THINK I HELPED TO INSTALL THE OWL WHERE THE KINGPIN USED TO SIT?

WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

OCTAVIUS! NO!!
UNGH!
Mary Jane--
KILL NORMAN OSBORN. KILL NORMAN OSBORN BY MIDNIGHT TONIGHT...
Doc Ock's brainwashed. Moving like he's fighting underwater. Doesn't stand a chance against the Goblin while Norman's in such unbelievable FORM.
OH, SHUT UP AND DIE, IDIOT. YOU'RE ONLY MAKING A FOOL OF YOURSELF.

OSBORN!
WHUH--?
STOP LAUGHING.

SNAK!
He tells me it cost him a THOUSAND BUCKS. A thousand bucks to some down-at-the-heel mystic to stop the psychics from locating Aunt May's WHEREABOUTS.
I'll never find her, he chokes and snorts. No matter how hard I hit him, he'll never tell me where she is in time for me to SAVE her.
PETER?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE DID HE--?
PETER!!
OH, PAY ATTENTION, PARKER!

THIS IS A BIG ONE TONIGHT-- ONE OF THOSE EPIC FIGHTS WHERE SOMEBODY DIES--AND TONIGHT THAT SOMEBODY'S DEAR, OLD MAY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO WINS HERE. YOU KNOW I'LL ONLY RISE FROM THE GRAVE AND WASTE YOUR TIME JUST LIKE SUPER-VILLAINS ARE SUPPOSED TO DO.
EITHER ME OR SOME CHEAP KNOCK-OFF WILL COME BACK AND HAUNT YOU AND STOP YOU DOING ANYTHING USEFUL WITH YOUR LIFE.
HEY, GENIUS!
WHA--?
BANG! BANG!
EAT THIS--
--AAOOWW!

PETER!
MARY JANE!
PEEEETERRR!!
Adrenal rush. Blood pumps straight into my eyeballs...
Gwen, Mary Jane. Gwen, Mary Jane.
Played this over in my head a million times. The SINGLE STRAND is what snapped Gwen's neck. Just not enough support. Oh, God make it work.
You've dreamt about this every single night, Parker. Just make it WORK this time. Hit every major joint. Don't take any CHANCES...
You can't afford to SCREW THIS UP again...

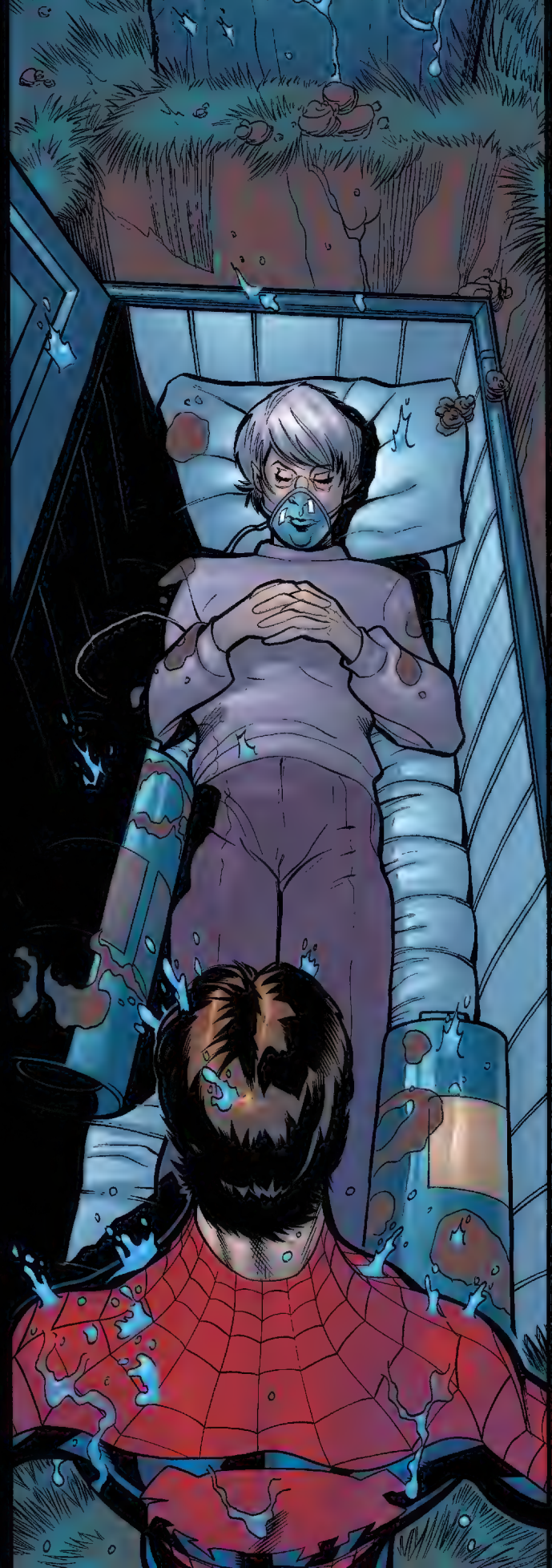
PETER!!!...
Oh, thank God.
YOU THINK YOU'RE GETTING A HAPPY ENDING HERE, PARKER? YOU THINK I HAVEN'T GOT A *MILLION* PLANS AND COUNTER-PLANS?
THIRTY-ONE MINUTES AND MAY PARKER RUNS OUT OF *OXYGEN*, INSECT. I'M TAKING A *BITE* OUT OF YOUR LIFE TONIGHT *NO MATTER WHAT.*
NORMAN, SHUT UP.
YOU WON'T *BELIEVE* HOW MUCH THIS HURTS!

OSBORN! GOT TO KILL OSBORN!
OCTAVIUS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? RELEASE ME THIS INSTANT!
GOT TO...
I'LL BURY THIS THING IN YOUR HEAD, YOU FAT...!

OSBORN!

WE ARE NEVER DOING THIS AGAIN, YOU HEAR ME? TONIGHT THIS ALL STOPS. WE ARE NEVER DOING THIS AGAIN.
WHAT ABOUT MAY?
DID YOU--?
I FAILED, MJ. THIRTY MINUTES AND SHE'LL BE DEAD. THIRTY MINUTES, BUT SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE IN THE CITY.
HE'S GOT EVERY BASE COVERED, THE LOUSY--
WHAT?
I KNOW WHERE SHE IS!
WHAT?
STAY HERE!
THE POLICE ARE ON THEIR WAY!

There was NEW TURF over the grave. Why was there new turf all over Uncle Ben's grave if they were just replacing a HEADSTONE?
"I think you've buried ENOUGH friends, Spider-Man."
That vision MARVEL GIRL had. What if she was just OFF BASE? What if she just couldn't get a picture and the tombstone she saw didn't mean Aunt May was dead?
Osborn said he had someone shield her whereabouts. What if this was just where he was HOLDING her?
"...enough dead friends to fill a cemetery by YOURSELF."
Oh dear God...
"May's just been anaesthetized and sleeping in her own mess for the last few months."
Why not? Osborn's one of the world's leading biochemists.
"She'll run out of drugs in forty-five minutes and choke on her own vomit..."
Osborn, you're a MONSTER.
"Tick-Tock. Tick-Tock."
"...she's hardly down among the dead men, young sir."
"Down among the DEAD men..."



AUNT MAY...?

I'll kill you for this, Osborn. I swear I'll--
Chemical stench. Just closed her whole system down.
But she's so OLD. So FRAIL--

No WAY she's going to come through this.
Got to find a pulse.
She's DEAD, Parker. Even Osborn couldn't have kept her sleeping all this time without--
GOT TO FIND A PULSE.

NO!!!
HUKKK--
KKUWW--
KAFF!
PETER?

LUCKY, Parker. LUCKY little fool...

Doctor Octopus was lucky too. Fished out of the river, half-drowned and stinking of brine. The cops pressed him for answers, but he was missing TWO ENTIRE MONTHS.
Naturally, the Goblin's body would never be recovered no matter HOW many times they trawled.
Black Cat woke up in a private room at the Beth Israel Memorial. She was checked in under the name JULIE NEWMAR and we both had a chuckle at the doctors' little gag.
I never noticed how alone she was until I realized there was nobody I could call and she made me promise to look after those smelly cats in that big, empty apartment of hers.
I hung around for an hour and a half, trying to cheer her up with my repertoire of bad jokes, but the grateful look in her eyes as she laughed and giggled just made me want to cry.
How could I have missed what Mary Jane and Norman Osborn and EVERYONE ELSE so blatantly saw? How could I have failed to notice that Felicia was still smitten as a kitten?

Mac Gargan had stopped calling himself The Scorpion and wanted VENOM inscripted on his door when things came full circle and they locked him up in Osborn's old cell.
"I'll never tell," he promised me in that double-barrelled voice...
WHY SHOULD I SHARE THE ONLY STICK I'LL EVER HAVE TO BEAT YOU WITH, PARKER?
But nature abhors a vacuum and I can't stop thinking about the secret Gargan told me: How, after a while, these new villains just appear through sheer physical MOMENTUM...
LOT EIGHTEEN IS THE COSTUME, NAME AND POWERS OF MISTER MAC GARGAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.
WHAT AM I BID, MY FRIENDS? WHAT SHOULD BE OUR OPENING BID FOR THE CHANCE TO BE THE NEW SCORPION?
SPIDER-MAN SAVES NY FROM NEW VENOM
On the PLUS SIDE, of course, the Daily Bugle has been giving me a lot of GOOD PRESS lately...
DAMN RIGHT THIS AIN'T A PUBLICITY STUNT, TOOTS! J. JONAH JAMESON HAS JUST SEEN THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS AND WANTS TO GIVE NEW YORK'S GREATEST HERO THE HEADLINES HE DESERVES!
AS OF THIS MOMENT IN TIME, OUR PAPER BACKS SPIDER-MAN EVERY CHANCE WE GET! RIGHT, JOHN-JOHN?
WHATEVER YOU SAY, POPS.
WHATEVER YOU SAY.
INSIDE FLIGHT
...not that any of this has lifted my MOOD.

MARY JANE *TOLD* ME I'D FIND YOU HERE. SHE SAID YOU ALWAYS COME DOWN TO THE BRIDGE WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT ON YOUR MIND.
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE HOUSE? THE GENTLEMAN WHO BOUGHT IT SAID I COULD RENT THE PLACE FOR NEXT TO *NOTHING*, PETER.
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT LAY EMPTY ALL THOSE MONTHS AND NOBODY WANTED TO LIVE IN IT? HONESTLY, AS IF A LITTLE *DAMPNESS* IS GOING TO KILL ANYONE...
AND, OF COURSE, SELLING THAT FANCY *MANHATTAN APARTMENT* CLEARS ALL YOUR DEBTS AND EVEN LEAVES A LITTLE MONEY TO SPARE.
IT'S ASTONISHING HOW MUCH THE PRICE OF PROPERTY GOES UP IN SUCH A SHORT TIME THESE DAYS. THAT NICE BROKER WITH THE *CROHN'S DISEASE* IS GOING TO HELP MARY JANE INVEST IT *WISELY* THIS...
PETER? WHAT'S WRONG?

I'M SORRY, AUNT MAY. YOU JUST SHOULDN'T BE LIVING IN A RAMSHACKLE OLD HOUSE WHERE THE INSIDE OF THE WINDOWS STILL FROST UP IN THE WINTER.
I SHOULD BE LOOKING AFTER YOU. I SHOULD BE MAKING MORE MONEY THAN THIS. I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SMART...
OH, BUT YOU ARE SMART, PETER. YOU'RE THE SMARTEST BOY I'VE EVER MET.
AND YOU'RE DOING A JOB THAT MEANS A LOT MORE THAN MAKING MONEY. YOU'RE SHAPING CHILDREN'S FUTURES IN THAT SCHOOL...
...NOT TO MENTION WHAT YOU DO AS SPIDER-MAN EVERY NIGHT.
ALL SPIDER-MAN DOES IS SELL NEWSPAPERS, AUNT MAY. OSBORN SAID IT HIMSELF...IT'S JUST A WAY OF MAKING SURE I DON'T DO ANYTHING OF ANY REAL SIGNIFICANCE.
PETER, YOU SAVE LIVES EVERY DAY.
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU'VE SAVED AS SPIDER-MAN? I LOOKED IT UP ON THE INTERNET AND IT WAS OVER TEN THOUSAND.
TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE DIRECTLY, PETER. THAT'S NOT EVEN COUNTING ALL THE BOMBS YOU'VE DEACTIVATED OR THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE WITH THE AVENGERS OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
ON WHAT PLANET IS ANY OF THAT INSIGNIFICANT?
IF IT WASN'T FOR SPIDER-MAN YOU'D NEVER HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED, AUNT MAY. I JUST CAN'T RISK ANYTHING LIKE THAT EVER HAPPENING AGAIN...

AND IF IT WASN'T FOR SPIDER-MAN I'D NEVER HAVE BEEN RESCUED.
DON'T LET OSBORN GET HIS FINGERS IN YOUR MIND. HE'S A HORRIBLE, DREADFUL PERSON AND THE ONLY THING HE LIVES FOR IS MAKING YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF.
HERE... I BROUGHT YOU A LITTLE GIFT...
WHAT'S THIS?
SOMETHING WARM TO WEAR UNDER YOUR CLOTHES WITH ALL THIS BAD WEATHER NEW YORK'S BEEN HAVING LATELY.
NOW COME ALONG HOME AND STOP BEING SILLY. MARY JANE SAID YOU THROW A HISSY-FIT ABOUT THIS JOB EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS, BUT YOU EVENTUALLY SEE SENSE AGAIN.
I'VE GOT YOUR FAVORITE WHEATCAKES IN THE OVEN AND THEY SHOULD BE JUST ABOUT DONE BY NOW.

My Dear Peter,
If you're reading this, it can only mean that I have failed in my latest endeavor and so I wish to offer my most heartfelt congratulations.
Obviously, this is one of several letters I had prepared and you have my word as an old friend that the assistant mailing this has no idea about the rather remarkable SECRET we both share.

I want to thank you for what I assume was both a fair and exciting battle and assure you that you can enjoy a period of relaxation regardless of whether I have survived or not.
It must be stressed that these fights are by no means a sign of any real enmity. On the contrary, I hold you in enormous regard and am always grateful for your attentions.

Were it not for you, I would be just another boring BUSINESSMAN running another boring CHEMICAL-MANUFACTURING BUSINESS.
Your intelligence and resourcefulness has given my life both structure and meaning and I apologize for any doubts I have placed in your mind as a result of our latest meeting.

As you know, your marriage, your reputation and your your passion for preserving the status quo are all very important to me and I can only hope that no seeds of doubt or uselessness have been planted in any way.
Take care and sleep well. I shall keep you in my prayers and trust that you shall always keep me in yours.
Forever,
Norman
1 Osborn Way
New York, NY 10022
MR. PETER PARKER
76 TITO WAY Apt. 8B
NEW YORK, NY 10018
END

MARVEL KNIGHTS SPIDER-MAN

I know for you Spider-Man has always come in red-and-blue, but for me his costume was always black-and-white. Here in Scotland, our Marvel Comics didn't come in this teeny A5 format either. Our books were laid out in a widescreen arrangement, opening up into cinemascope with four American pages stacked side by side every time we opened up a book. This means that one issue of the SUPER SPIDER-MAN WEEKLY, for example, contained a Spidey story, an issue of THOR, an issue of IRON MAN and even a Dr. Strange story all for the same price you suckers were paying for a single comic in the so-called Land of the Free. Okay, they were black-and-white reprints and years out of date, but who needed a professional colorist when I had a big bag of marker pens and could (mostly) stay in the lines by myself.

Over these last few years, I seem to have garnered a reputation for writing gritty or shocking content and I lay the blame entirely on one of these very comics bought for me by one of my many older brothers. Bobby, as someone might have spotted, had my run on this title dedicated to him for introducing me to super heroes and Spider-Man in particular. He's a pretty decent, upstanding member of the community these days and people think of him as one of the more level-headed siblings in my large, Catholic brood, but looking back on the first book he ever bought me ("The Goblin's Last Stand," AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #122), I'm afraid I can only lay the blame for every repulsive, violent and sadistic idea I've ever come up with squarely at his door for what has to be one of the most screwed-up, depressing and yet utterly brilliant super-hero stories ever written.

Imagine my 6-year-old eyes as Marvel's answer to Superman accidentally snaps his girlfriend's neck, swears he's going to murder his arch-nemesis, ducks and allows said arch-nemesis to be crucified by a sputtering piece of Halloween hardware, walks out on his drug-addicted friend, and then slowly has a nervous breakdown alone in his apartment. It was the greatest twenty pages I had ever seen and, between this point and the dawn of Christopher Reeve's first Superman movie, I was a Marvelite to the very core of my being, and would happily slit the throat of anyone who dared to read the Distinguished Competition. The eternal genius of Stan Lee can never be exaggerated, but writer Gerry Conway almost never gets the props for what must surely be one of the most inspirational comic books ever put together. It's interesting that, more than thirty years later, we're still dealing with this story on some level, and it occurred to me that writing the first year on MARVEL KNIGHTS SPIDER-MAN wasn't only a labor of love, but should probably be considered as some form of therapy, too.

Of course, writing another big Goblin story was a huge attraction in accepting this assignment when they asked me to launch a new Spider-Man book and revamping Spidey's villains (some of the best in comics) seemed long overdue. I loved these characters growing up and it's kind of rankled me in recent years seeing them relegated to comic relief. But the main challenge was the notion that I only ever had twelve issues to say everything I had to say about the character and get all that love and enthusiasm down on paper inside a finite period of time. The brief for MK SPIDER-MAN is that a really good, new creative team would get a shot at the bat every year and constantly reinvigorate the book every twelve issues with their own unique take on the characters.

Next up are Reggie Hudlin and Billy Tan and—after what's possibly my favorite super-hero comic of the last year—Reggie and Johnny Romita's new BLACK PANTHER series—I'm genuinely pleased to stop typing and start reading again and see what they have to contribute to this mythology over the coming twelve months. Terry, Rachel, Frank and I have had one of the best experiences of our professional careers on this book, and I could have asked for no better partners in a year of stories that we're all incredibly proud of. But it's going to be nice to sit back and see others strut their stuff for a while as all four of us think of ways to spend the royalties from the hardcover.

Mark Millar
Glasgow, Scotland
21st February 2005

NEXT ISSUE:

NEXT MONTH:
HEY! WHO'S THAT PUTTING THE MOVES ON MJ?! FIND OUT IN 30 DAYS, TRUE BELIEVER!

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